FANNY FERN: A SOCIAL CRITIC IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Rapin Tongra-ar, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1995
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This dissertation explores Fanny Fern's literary position and her role as a social critic of American lives and attitudes in the nineteenth-century. A reexamination of Fern's literary and non-literary works sheds light on her firm stand for the betterment of all mankind. The diversity and multiplicity of Fern's social criticism and her social reform attitudes, evident in *Ruth Hall*, *Rose Clark*, and in voluminous newspaper articles, not only prove her concern for society's well-being, but also reflect her development of and commitment to her writing career.

Chapter one concentrates on the social background in nineteenth-century America with regard to conventional women's roles and status, education, health, religious beliefs, job opportunities for women, men, and immigrants, racism, and abolitionism that led to the Civil War. It also focuses on Fern's emergence as a novelist and columnist, her reception, and her immediate faded fame after her death. Chapter two shows Fern's gradual, but persistent revolt against what Barbara Welter defines as "The Cult of True Womanhood." It traces Fern's development and growth of her ideas in relation to her attitudes toward women's roles and status, her denigration of the romantic notion of marriage and the revered picture of the husband, and her rebellion against the "virtue" of submissiveness. Chapter three examines Fern's strong support of equal opportunities for women's higher education, financial independence, the right to vote, and the acceptance
of "the new woman." Chapter four emphasizes Fern's advocacy of children's rights and individuality. It illustrates Fern's concern for their education, health, manners, and religious knowledge. Chapter five analyzes Fern's attitude toward religious practices with regard to the hypocrisy of churches, ministers, and parishioners. It also shows Fern's concern for the less fortunate: the poor, prisoners, and fallen women, and her agitation for improved conditions.

I conclude that Fanny Fern is primarily a social critic who firmly stands for such good causes as Women's Rights, women's education, and equal opportunities for all regardless of sex, class, and race.
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CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND THE
EMERGENCE OF FANNY FERN

Every cloud has a silver lining . . . Keep your head above the wave; let neither sullen despair nor weak vacillation drag you under . . . Dream not of the word "surrender!" . . . The Great Alchemist passes you through the furnace but to purify . . . The clusters of Hope may be seen with the eye of faith . . . Nil Desverandum!

Fanny Fern, "Nil Desperandum,"

_Fern Leaves_, first series (FL1), 67-68.

Social and cultural changes occurred rapidly and tremendously in mid-nineteenth-century America, roughly from the 1850s to the 1880s, the period of my concentration in this dissertation. The once agrarian society speedily modernized itself into an industrialized one. Numerous inventions relieved women of their time-consuming household chores as well as rendered them more leisure to read. The establishment of various female seminaries and colleges not only widened women's opportunities for higher education, but it also extended their chances to obtain respectable jobs outside the home. Railroad expansion made communication faster and more convenient, and helped
hasten the widespread popularity of newspapers and periodicals. In short, Daniel Walker Howe in "Victorian Culture in America" characterizes the period as "a time of industrialization, knowledge explosion, immigration and vast population growth, urbanization, geographical expansion, changing race relationships, and the greatest armed conflict on American soil" (3).

A period of drastic changes, mid-nineteenth-century America witnessed many aspects of industrialization. Economic growth and improvement progressed through the innovations of technologies. The assembly-line technique of manufacture with interchangeable parts, according to Richard D. Brown in "Modernization: A Victorian Climax," was widely known as the "American System" by the 1830s (35). Farmlands well-equipped with newly-developed machines yielded ample fruitful produce and became more commercially organized. The cotton, tobacco, and food industries, adopting mass-production techniques, benefited from abundant productivity. Thomas J. Schlereth in Victorian America: Transformation in Everyday Life, 1876-1915 contends that the evidence of modernization appeared in the employment of various technologies: the interchangeability of parts in the manufacturing of firearms; precision jigs and gauges in tool-and-die companies; the handling of materials by conveyor belts in grain milling and iron-foundrying; special or single-purpose machinery in can making; time-and-motion efficiency studies in steel production; slaughterhouse "disassembly" lines in meat packing; and sheet-metal stamping and electric-resistance welding in bicycle manufacturing (57). In other words, businesses in all forms prospered immensely with regard to their voluminous output.
The employment of advanced technologies in almost all industries, however, forced society to encounter a number of social problems. The innovation of ring spinning frames to replace spinning mules in textile manufactures in Massachusetts resulted in competition among a thousand highly skilled spinners for eight hundred jobs. The new pneumatic iron-molding techniques in the McCormick farm-implement plant caused the dismissal of the entire group of iron molders to be replaced by unskilled workmen (Schlereth 56). Unemployment, the consequence of the decreasing demand for such skilled craftsmen as tailors, miners, iron-makers, and the like, inevitably became a pressing matter society had to face.

To some extent, a great number of social problems developed as a result of modernization. Industrial growth at home and abroad brought about a new social class: the working class, both Americans and immigrants. Lured by the prospects of wealth from the discovery of gold in California in 1848, waves and waves of immigrants from various countries—the Americas, Europe, and Asia, flooded into the United States, anticipating that this would be the land of opportunity. Although travelling in steamships was tormenting because of crowding and filthiness, Catherine Clinton in The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth-Century contends that five million immigrants (two million Irish, one and a half million Germans, a half million Scandinavians, and another million of other nationalities) came to the United States between 1815 and 1865 (111). John Bodnar in The Transplanted: History of Immigrants in Urban America classifies the immigrants into two categories. The first was a pioneer group composed of such skilled artisans as mechanics, jewelers, clockmakers, butchers, and bakers as well as
independent farmers who were threatened by the factory production of cheap goods and by the commercialization of agriculture. The second group was comprised of marginal land owners who were poorer in status and larger in numbers. While the former normally came in family units with little or no hope of returning to their homelands, the latter came as individuals who were likely to return home after earning sufficient funds (52-53).

To survive the many hardships and racism from white supremacy, the fortune-hunting aliens had to struggle relentlessly. The Alien Contract Labor Law (1855), the Act of February 19, 1862, the Act of February 9, 1869, the Ku Klux Klan (1866-1869), and the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) proved to be a series of zealous attempts to limit the number of immigrants and to terminate their existence. The Chinese, of all immigrants, seemed to receive the most resentment. Schlereth verifies: "Only when they remained behind the colorful lion-gates of urban chinatowns did the Chinese find a measure of security" (11). Immigrants, mostly located in California, were essentially different from slaves in that they were not provided with permanent accommodation, meals, or other benefits. Californian commercial farmers hired them as a seasonal workforce to plant new crops or to harvest produce because they preferred "cheap foreign workers whom they looked upon as a separate and inferior caste . . . energetic laborers, willing to accept living and working conditions and wages that whites rejected" (Schlereth 42).

Not only did immigrants labor on farms, they were also hired in mill towns, factories, and coal mines. Living conditions, regardless of their workplaces, were more or less the same: long working hours, low compensation, high disability as well as mortality rates, and an unhealthy standard of living. Immigrants, unskilled and untrained,
risked their lives every day under a vile environment. Moreover, the immigrants' unhealthy and unsanitary living environment called for an immediate social concern. Mary P. Ryan in *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* concedes that the Irish immigrants' residences portrayed a pitiful situation: "Peasant families seldom occupied a more elaborate domicile than a dirt-floored cottage, which they were apt to share with livestock as well as relatives" (155). Millions of immigrants lived in city ghettos with no running water or toilets. Diet deficiency, pneumonia, and tuberculosis aggravated their health problems and increased their death rates. Poverty-stricken, immigrants provoked social involvement. They needed health and medical care, education for their children, and proper accommodation for their growing families.

The language barrier and the need for survival forced immigrants to accept unfair wages. Female immigrants, for example, were paid considerably less than their male counterparts. Catherine Clinton points out that the number of non-native women working in the mills and in factories, increased immensely from 37 percent in 1850 to 76 percent in 1865. Their working conditions were not any better than those of men. They usually worked in the stifling, crowded, dimly lit factories for fifteen to sixteen hours a day and received from two-thirds to one-half the pay of men. To supplement their diminutive income, most of these women were forced to turn to part-time prostitution (113).

Between 1840 and 1880, prostitution actually became a prosperous trade. Chinese women were mostly imported against their will to cater to Chinese men, or to be bought as concubines by some wealthy whites. Suffering from abusive treatment and addicted to opium, the unfortunate women deteriorated rapidly and many perished as young women.
At the 1876 hearings held by the California state legislator, a minister from San Francisco described the exploitation of these women:

The women . . . are held as slaves. They are bought or stolen in China and brought here . . . after the term of prostitution service is up, the owners so manage as to have the women in debt more than ever, so that their slavery becomes lifelong . . . Sometimes women take opium to kill themselves . . . They have come to the asylum all bruises. They are beaten and punished cruelly if they fail to make any money. When they become worn out and unable to make more money, they are turned out to die. (Clinton 118)

Witnessing such horrid and inhumane treatment of women, California prohibited the importation of "lewd or debauched" women. However, during the 1870s, Clinton asserts, "the American consul in Hong Kong received kickbacks and blithely granted importers clearance, netting $10 for every woman shipped to the United States" (118). Female exploitation continued.

Working in factories was not the only form of female employment in mid-nineteenth-century America. Sizable and fast-growing cities offered many types of jobs for women: seamstresses, washerwomen, and domestic servants. Irish and German immigrants seemed to dominate the domestic service market. Irish girls started working as servants at approximately eleven years old. One-half to two-thirds of all Irish daughters in the age group eighteen to twenty-one were employed as domestics. (Ryan 155) Church groups, want-ads in newspapers, and the "intelligence office" functioned as media to supply servants to employers. The influx of impoverished immigrants and their
financial needs are horrifyingly depicted in Faye E. Dudden’s description of "Mrs. Bourke's intelligence" in Philadelphia in 1870: "It is a most disgusting business, this of running to intelligence offices, and unfit for a lady... ladies elegantly dressed in one room waiting to choose, and a crowd of hideous Irish monsters in another waiting to be chosen. Out of the lot it is rare to be able to select one fit to enter a decent house" (81).

Unlike "hired girls" who were employed for temporary jobs in the fields or in the house when extra work was needed to be accomplished, and unlike factory workers who had certain hours of work, domestic servants had limited freedom. They lived with their employers (usually in a separate quarter of the house, or in an attic, or near the kitchen), ate from the family’s leftovers, received handed-down clothes, and earned a minimal wage. Practically, servants were expected to work long hours; they were up long before the family arose and long after the family went to bed. Moreover, they had few time-offs, not many holidays, and little or no prospect for suitors. However well-accommodated and properly clothed and fed, the immigrants sometimes felt isolated and nostalgic for their homelands because they were required to live in a household full of strangers who conversed only in a foreign tongue. It was not unusual that these domestics left for other jobs when possible.

Unfair treatment was not exclusive to immigrants. American working females endured similar conditions. Uneducated, over-worked, and underpaid wage earners lived unhealthy and undernourished lives. Compensation for women’s labor was negligible. Women working as seamstresses received a slightly different wage from those laboring in factories. While the former received approximately $1.25 in a six-day week of from
dawn to dusk work, the latter earned $2 a week, "scarcely above the price of individual survival and well below typical male wages" (Ryan 123). The long, relentless struggle for equality in wages came about in the form of strikes such as that which occurred in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1860. Female workers protested, "American Ladies will not be Slaves: Give us a Fair compensation and We Will Labour [sic] Cheerfully" (Ryan 124). A comparison of women to slaves was later to be applied to all women to awaken them to their rightful status and to their equality in human rights.

Inconsistent with the belief of equality in a new nation "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," American southerners, the owners of large plantations, exploited slaves for their own economic purposes. The invention of the cotton gin and the widespread growth of international markets enlarged southern agriculture as well as enabled slavery to be a profitable business. Although the slave trade was outlawed in 1808, Hugh Brogan certifies in "The Social and Cultural Setting" that the number of slaves grew from 1,538,038 in 1820 to 2,487,455 in 1840 and 3,953,760 in 1860 (34). Profits gained from slaves' labor were too immense for slave owners to contemplate emancipation. Both male and female slaves toiled in the fields, in the masters' households, and in their own quarters. Female slaves functioned as breeders to produce more slaves/laborers. Miscegenation was common and inevitable because white masters conveniently turned their owned women into objects for sexual gratification. Such brutal treatment gradually disturbed the nation's conscience.

Distinguished writers, preachers, abolitionist agitators, and lecturers continuously argued in favor of slaves' emancipation. Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience"
(1846) demonstrated the author's resentment of and his refusal to cooperate in the pro-slavery war against Mexico. The fugitive Frederick Douglass gave lectures vilifying the evils of slavery. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-52), a novel depicting slaves' dreadful lives, became a best-seller and was translated into many languages. John Greenleaf Whittier had devoted decades of his life to writing against slavery. He dedicated ninety-eight double-columned pages to this topic in his *Poetical Works*. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow expressed his view on the matter in eight anti-slavery poems. Julia Ward Howe's *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* (1861) illustrated the same cause, pleading the owners to free the owned.

Peaceful emancipation seemed futile. The need for slaves' labor and the profits reaped from them were too great for slave owners to be willing to set them free easily. The Fugitive Slave Law enforced in Boston in 1851 seemed to hasten the outbreak of the Civil War. Beginning on April 12, 1861 with the firing of Confederate guns on Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, the Civil War disastrously erupted and did not end until April 9, 1865, when Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Virginia. A long period of Reconstruction to heal their divisions followed for both sides, particularly for the defeated South that faced a more devastating aftermath. Agriculture eventually yielded to the rapid growth of industrialization. Internal migrations occurred throughout the country. The nation seemed to respond to Horace Greeley's celebrated advice, "Go West, young man!"

Demographic changes in mid-nineteenth-century America began as early as 1854 when "the New York Children's Aid Society arranged 'orphaned trains' that took ninety
thousand abandoned and orphaned children from eastern cities to new lives in the western states" (Schlereth 13). Families needing children could adopt any child they preferred.

After the Civil War, mass migration of hundreds of thousands toward the trans-Mississippi West and that of millions of immigrants to the eastern part of the country occurred. Unfortunately, as a consequence of the Westward expansion, many American Indian tribes were brutally forced to move, time and again, to less desirable lands.

Freed slaves and fortune-seeking whites also relocated themselves to the West, hoping for a new life and nonagricultural jobs. The first migration of blacks out of the South was in 1879. The “exodusters,” composed of six thousand freedmen, left the lower Mississippi Valley for Kansas (Schlereth 16). An era of mobility, nineteenth-century America also unwillingly witnessed a new group of homeless persons classified as “the tramps” who emerged during the depression of the 1870s. Their aggressiveness forced city councils to pass “tramp acts” in the 1880s. In summary, the period was noted as a time of constant geographical expansion and spectacular urban growth. The population increase and the rapid development of big cities were astonishing. New York’s population of 152,000 in 1820 became more than a million in 1860. Chicago, founded in 1833, had become the country’s second largest city in less than sixty years. (Brogan 40)

In many aspects, the nation developed on an immense and rapid scale.

In accord with rapid developments and social changes, mid-nineteenth-century America encountered religious diversity. The Second Great Awakening (1797-1840) revivified orthodox Calvinistic doctrines with an emphasis on original sin and human depravity. The distribution of Bibles and the Sunday School Movement stimulated
numerous conversions. In 1869, Methodists founded Ocean Grove to maintain moral order in an urban-industrial society. A strong faith in individual self-improvement and a strict enforcement of "holiness Sundays" were their emphases. Countless successful conversions, especially among the mill girls in upstate New York, under the direction of the Reverend Charles Finney were exemplary. In one cotton factory, Mary P. Ryan relates, "young female workers burst into tears of repentance at the very sight of the evangelist" (126). Overcome with strong religious feelings and unable to continue their work or studies, many people, especially the young, experienced conversions. The hope for salvation noticeably enlarged the congregations.

The influx of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, on the other hand, caused the widespread growth of the Catholic Church in the United States, its membership reaching 6,259,000 by 1880 making it the single largest religious denomination in the United States. (Schlereth 264) Catholic immigrants formed thousands of parishes offering not only religious services but community centers as well. Similar to Catholics, blacks formed their own religious groups such as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (1870) and the National Baptist Convention (1895).

Thomas J. Schlereth, however, contends that although Jim Crow laws segregated blacks from whites and aggravated whites' hostility toward blacks, the xenophobia that whites felt toward aliens was more intense. (265) In the summer of 1884, riots broke out in Philadelphia where Catholic churches and a seminary were burned down. Equality and freedom for all Americans were not yet truly established in America.

A stepping stone toward equality and freedom was apparent in the growth of
education. Free public schools were one of the great nineteenth-century innovations providing education for the first time to immigrants' children, blacks, and the poor. Moreover, higher education was no longer reserved to males. Daniel Walker Howe observes that the nineteenth century "witnessed establishment of school systems for whites and blacks in the South and West, the origin of many new types of institutions for professional and vocational training, the opening of higher education to women" (23).

The educational system was divided into kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and college. Students learned reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic in the beginning level. Intermediate-level students studied additional subjects of geography and nature. History and grammar were particular for students of the advanced level. The most popular textbooks between 1870 to 1890 which students had to memorize and recite were McGuffey's Eclectic Readers (Schlereth 244). It is noteworthy that these texts provided many religious reading lessons with an emphasis on female characters who embodied moral virtues.

Although education expanded widely, equality for all in knowledge acquisition did not really exist. Segregation remained throughout the country. Race, class, religion, and ethnic background all played important roles. Blacks, American Indians, and Asians were isolated from whites. Similarly, white women underwent sexual segregation. They attended schools, but were not actually encouraged to pursue education at the college level. Such devoted, educated, and ambitious women as Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon opened famous female seminaries specially designed for higher and sophisticated education of young women in Troy, New York (Troy Seminary) in
1821, in Hartford, Connecticut (Hartford Female Seminary) in 1823, in central Massachusetts (Mount Holyoke) in 1837, respectively. Academic studies provided in these institutions ranged from philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, sciences, literature and classical languages to practical training in domestic arts with a strong emphasis on moral education. Seminaries' graduates normally returned home to complete necessary domestic education from their mothers before becoming either teachers or suitable brides.

The popularity of teaching as a career for women is evident in the flourishing of various female academies throughout the country. Caroline Livy's academy in Rome, Georgia, the Utica Female Academy, and Almira Lincoln Phelps' Patapsco Female Institute in Maryland were all well known. In Massachusetts alone, approximately one in four native-born women had spent some time in front of a classroom (Ryan 136). The Board of National Popular Education established by Catherine Beecher not only legitimized female teachers, but it also encouraged more women to enter into the teaching profession. Unfortunately, female teachers' wages, despite their qualifications and their considerable spiritual influence as spiritual redeemers of men's souls, were only "60 percent of what their male counterparts were paid" (Clinton 123). In addition, they were superintended and directed by male principals and administrative staff. Career women in nineteenth-century America, nevertheless, partly succeeded in advancing an important step toward financial independence outside their homes.

Acquiring occupations outside the domestic sphere was a starting point of victory for women to relish more freedom and to commence the gradual termination of their dependent and submissive roles. Traditional breadwinners, male members of the family
demanded subservience from female dependents: wives and daughters. Distinctive separation of the two spheres designates different roles and duties of both sexes. Men working in the outside world were financial providers. Women, ruling the home, attended to household functions: rearing and educating children, managing domestic activities, and sacrificing their own needs for men's well-being. Barbara Leslie Epstein contends in *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* that evidence from manuals and household guides indicates that women were instructed to accept their confinement, to be "obedient," and to "show their gratitude for male support and protection with childlike docility and admiring love" (78). Women's abilities and opportunities to earn their own living eventually ended their tendency to plunge into marriages of convenience in fear of unsupportive spinsterhood.

Higher education markedly liberated and enhanced women to become more aware of their inferior roles and to strive for freedom and equality. Novel household inventions such as central heating, sanitary plumbing, artificial lighting, condensed milk, and the sewing machine conveniently relieved women of domestic burdens. Educated and having more free time, women constituted a vast reading audience in the era which many historians regard as that of a "communications revolution" (Schlereth 177). The invention of the steam-powered printing press in 1811, the economical manufacture of paper, improvements in the transportation system (the Erie Canal completed in 1825, the replacement of railroads for stagecoaches in the 1840s), and later, the cheaper mailing rates established by Congress in 1879 provided the public with a convenient access to the press and prompted it as an important vehicle for nationwide communication. Women,
prospective readers, indulged themselves in particular columns of their interests such as household and fashion hints, poetry, advice columns, short sketches, serialized fiction, and travel accounts.\textsuperscript{4} Mid-nineteenth-century America was in fact a culminating period for an abundance of great publishing houses, mostly in two leading publishing cities: New York City and Philadelphia. The establishments of Harper, Putnam, Carey, Thomas, Ticknor and Fields, Cummins and Hillards dominated the publishing industry in the 1840s and 1850s. As a consequence of printing prosperity, magazines and newspapers flourished. Harold Beaver in "The Literary Scene" affirms that by 1860, "there were more than six times the number of magazines published than in 1825: that is, 575 magazines, 372 daily newspapers and 271 weeklies" (59-60). Ornamented annuals and elaborated gift books were in great demand.

American middle-class women were not only active as readers, they also contributed their talents by writing for periodicals and newspapers. Popular printed media such as Godey's Lady's Book (1830-1898), Harper's New Monthly Magazine (1850-present), Peterson's Magazine (1842-1898), The New York Ledger (1847-1898), and many others featured numerous women writers. These prolific and popular "scribbling women" or "bluestockings" found pages of magazines as outlets for their opinions in such matters as religious belief, philosophical concepts, domestic advice, social concerns, and proper everyday manners; as a forum for their literary aspiration in a variety of forms; and as a source to earn extra income in case the head of the household failed to provide sufficiently.

A long list of famous female writers in nineteenth-century America and a statistics
of their voluminous sales signify, at least in part, the public taste of the period. Maria
Susanna Cummins' *The Lamplighter* (1854) sold 40,000 copies in the first eight weeks.
Marion Harland's *Alone* (1854) sold 100,000 copies a year for five years. Augusta Jane
Evans Wilson's *St. Elmo* (1866) was among the thirty most popular novels ever published
in the United States. Susan B. Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) was reprinted
thirteen times in two years, altogether sixty-seven times. Emma Dorothy Eliza Neville
Southworth's *Retribution* (1849) sold 200,000 copies. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle
Tom's Cabin* (1851-52) was exceptional, with 5,000 copies of its first edition sold in
forty-eight hours. Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) and Mary Jane
Hawes Holmes's *Tempest and Sunshine* (1854) were also highly successful novels.

(Beaver 61)

Despite a large audience and an immense income from their sales, female writers
did not receive much attention from male literati. Their works were not considered "great
literature." Rather, they were labeled "domestic," or "sentimental" subliterature because
their subject matter, critics contended, revolved around the domestic sphere: home,
husband, children, birth, death, moral lessons, and religious values. Women's fiction
was popular, Harold Beaver argues, because the "huge new market of literate and leisured
women needed fiction that spoke to women and dealt with women's problems" (62).
This market, Beaver continues, was "intensely constricting. Its narrow domestic
emphasis served only to enforce a conventional morality. Church and children and
chastity were its sole touchstones" (62). The allegation signifies that all Americans were
not actually freed by the revolution. Domesticity relegated many well-educated women to
lives of conventionality.

Having experienced household activities first-hand, women writers delivered an accurate picture of mid-nineteenth-century American life. Home was a woman’s kingdom where she had sole authority over domestic matters. Husbands were revered and allowed dominance because they were providers who had absolute control over property and legal rights. Mothers had full responsibilities to provide children with proper care, love, moral and spiritual education. Women writers’ depiction of birth and death in their fiction seemed to indicate public health in general. High mortality rates of infants, young children, and women in childbirth were common. To cope with losses from death, women writers employed religion as a method of consolation. The world, these writers seemed to believe, was too evil for the young and the innocent. The heavenly Father, therefore, summoned them back. As a matter of fact, high maternity and infant death rates reflected not God’s desire to add prematurely to his heavenly kingdom, but rather the primitive medical technologies and incompetent medical personnel of the period. Including subject matter of family lives and the plights of women in their works, women writers gained popularity because their audience, mostly female, could identify themselves with such stories perfectly well.

Similar to other nineteenth-century American women writers in her emergence to fame and wealth; yet, different from them in her style of writing, vernacular language, and provocative subject matter, Fanny Fern was a literary light worthy of close attention. She was born on July 9, 1811 on Essex Street in Portland, Maine. The fifth of nine children of Nathaniel Willis, a deacon of Park Street Church, and Hannah Parker Willis,
Fern was first christened Grata Payson Willis after the mother of Reverend Edward Payson, an influential Congregational minister. Later, her parents renamed her Sara and the family moved to Boston when Fern was six weeks old.

Although the Willis' ancestor George Willis who came from England to Massachusetts in 1630 was a brickmaker and builder, the later generation took to journalism as their trade. The sixth generation from George Willis, Nathaniel Willis, Fern's grandfather who was born in 1755, assisted his father Charles Willis in establishing The Independent Chronicle in 1776, the Revolutionary War period. Nathaniel's son, also Nathaniel Willis, Fern's father, who was born on June 6, 1780, followed his father's occupation by becoming an apprentice in a printing office. Later in Portland he published The Eastern Argus which was at first a radical anti-Federalist paper, but gradually became more religious in subject matter. When his Portland printing business was not doing well, Nathaniel Willis moved his family to Boston. There in 1816 he established the Boston Recorder, to be one of America's first religious newspapers. In 1827, he published The Youth's Companion from his printing office on Devonshire Street. This periodical, aiming at entertaining and improving young people, existed for 102 years.

The Willises lived quite comfortably in a three-story brick house at 31 Atkinson Street near Fort Hill. This house, the embodiment of Fern's happy childhood and precious memories of her gentle and beloved mother, was in later years repeatedly depicted in her sketches and newspaper columns.

Fortunately for the Willis' children, Nathaniel Willis and his wife were perfectly aware of the importance of education. They strongly supported and encouraged their
children to attain the best possible. Their sons went to Yale, while their daughter attended the best seminaries. Fern's parents sent her to the Emerson Ladies' Seminary at Saugus, but she left after a short period because of an outbreak of scarlet fever. From 1825 to 1827, Fern and her sister Mary attended Zilpah Polly Grant's school in Derry, New Hampshire. Catherine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary accommodated Fern for the last three years of her formal education. Schooling under the supervision of such a pious but practical schoolmistress, Fern's parents believed, would influence Fern to conform to stern Calvinistic doctrines. Besides, "Miss Beecher's school," Fern's granddaughter Ethel Parton⁸ in "Fanny Fern at the Hartford Female Seminary" certifies, "was in its day extremely advanced, and in Latin, mathematics and literature gave the 'seminary young ladies' instruction of a thoroughness and extent then almost unheard of for girls" (94).

At Hartford Female Seminary, Fern impressed her teachers (Harriet Beecher Stowe was a student/teacher at that time) and her classmates with her adventurous nature and her "high spirits" (Ethel Parton 96). James Parton, Fern's third husband, described her youthful appearance in Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume thus: "Sara Willis was a plump, rosy, vigorous little girl, with a rare profusion of yellow curls that attracted the notice of many passers-by" (26). Fern's nickname "Yellowbird" alluded to the color of her hair (Ethel Parton 96). Elizabeth Bancroft Schlesinger clarifies in "Fanny Fern: Our Grandmother's Mentor" that "Sol Volatile," the other schoolgirl nickname, "characterized her personality, which fizzed, foamed, and sparkled throughout her life" (24). Much later, Harriet Beecher Stowe warmly recounted many incidents of Fern's rebellious nature
that occurred during their mutual school years. Ethel Parton quotes Stowe's letter to James Parton thanking him for supporting the rights of American authors and her reminiscences of Fanny Fern thus:

I believe you have a claim on a certain naughty girl once called Sarah Willis . . . who . . . one night stole a pie at Mrs. Strong's and did feloniously excite to sedition and rebellion some five or six other girls--eating said pie . . . in defiance of the laws of the school . . . ask her if it isn't so? and if she remembers curling her hair with leaves from her geometry?--perhaps she has long been penitent--perhaps--but . . . when I read Fanny Fern's articles I detect sparks of the old witchcraft and say, as poor Mrs. Strong [the matron] used to when any new mischief turned up, 'That's Sarah Willis, I know!' (95)

The incident of Fern's switching Catherine Beecher's plate of better-quality butter with that of a cheaper kind provided for students (Ethel Parton 96) illustrates her desire for equality which years later would fully manifest itself in the many social causes advocated in her newspaper columns.

Although Robert P. Eckert, Jr. in "Friendly Fragrant Fanny Fern" insists that Fern was "neither studious nor particularly brilliant" at Catherine Beecher's seminary, he admits that she was very talented in composition. "Suggestions on Arithmetic," Fern's essay read at the annual exhibition in 1829 warrants her witty and humorous writing capability. Overwhelmingly absorbed in mathematics, Fern wrote of her absent-minded conversation with an acquaintance:

Of his many speeches, one in which he protested his warm interest brought only
one word that chimed with my train of thought. 'Interest,' exclaimed I, starting from my reverie. 'What per cent, sir?' 'Ma'am?' exclaimed my attendant in the greatest possible amazement. 'How much per cent, sir?' said I, repeating my question. His reply was lost on my ear, save, 'Madam, at any rate do not trifle with my feelings.' 'At any rate, did you say? Then take six per cent; that is the easiest to calculate.' Suddenly I found myself deserted--why or wherefore I was too busy to conjecture. (Ethel Parton 97)

Fully acquainted with journalism, James Parton asserts, the Willis' children "took to pen and ink as to a native element" and "Facility in composition was too common among them to be remarked" (32).

Writing ability successfully launched at least four Willises in renowned journalistic careers. Nathaniel Willis was a well-known poet since his Yale years. He worked as a foreign correspondent for The New York Mirror, edited The American Monthly Magazine, and with George Morris founded The Home Journal. Richard Storrs Willis, Fern's younger brother, was a famous composer and poet. He was also an editor of The Musical World and Times and Once a Week. Julia Dean Willis was a brilliant linguist, teacher, and for many years wrote for The Home Journal. Fanny Fern was well known as the highest paid female columnist and as a prolific writer.

Graduated from the seminary, Fanny Fern returned home to learn domestic arts required of women. Florence Bannard Adams in Fanny Fern, or a Pair of Flaming Shoes asserts that Fern's father's "advanced ideas on education did not include careers for his daughters . . . marriage was the consecrated lot of women" (4). On May 8, 1838 Fern
married Charles Harrington Eldredge, a cashier of the merchants' Bank, the only son of Dr. Hezekiah Eldredge, a prominent Boston physician, and Mary Eldredge. Fern was content and happy as a wife for nine productive years. Three daughters were born: Mary in 1839, Grace Harrington in 1840, and Ellen Willis in 1844. A series of tragedies began to strike Fern in 1844 when her youngest sister Ellen died in childbirth. Six weeks later her understanding mother died. Mary, Fern's eldest daughter's death in 1845 was followed by that of Nathaniel Willis' first wife Mary Stace in childbirth. The ultimate grief reached Fern when Charles Eldredge in his prime suddenly died of typhoid fever in 1847.

Penniless, unemployed, and ignorant of the outside world, Fanny Fern and her two small children received scanty pittance from her remarried father and her wealthy-but-stingy in-laws. With limited means to support her family and with strong urges from both sides of the family who wished to terminate their financial burdens, Fern reluctantly married Samuel P. Farrington, an affluent and seemingly pious Boston merchant on January 15, 1849. A marriage of convenience ended scandalously after three years because "he proved intensely jealous of Fanny, of her friends, of her work, of her popularity, and of her vivacity. Fanny tried to be submissive, but it was not her nature. She rebelled at his petty whims and his endless tyranny" (Eckert n.p.). Farrington methodically obtained a divorce in Chicago in 1852 on the grounds of desertion. Once again, Fern attempted to stand on her own. However, her earnings as a seamstress were not nearly sufficient. She was forced to leave her older child Grace in the care of the Eldredges. Her genuine effort to secure a teaching position with no influential support
failed; yet, her determination to survive and to take care of both of her children motivated her to turn to writing.

Having an older brother as a renowned poet and famous editor of the New York Home Journal with a reputation of rendering full support to both female and struggling male writers, Fanny Fern naturally sought his assistance for her journalistic career. She sent Nathaniel Parker Willis copies of her short, spriteful, and humorous sketches. His reply dissuading her from pursuing a writing career upset her deeply. Joyce W. Warren in Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman reveals that N. P. Willis told Fern that her writings "show talent, but they are in a style that would only do in Boston," that she "overstrained the pathetic," and that her "humor runs into dreadful vulgarity sometimes . . . In one or two cases they trench very close on indecency" (93). Nathaniel Parker Willis' discouraging letter understandably severed the siblings' relationship; but far from destroying her courage to write for a living, it instead helped stiffen Fern's resolve to continue writing more diligently and seriously.

Fern's first article, "A Model Husband," was printed on June 28, 1851 in the Boston Olive Branch, a paper modestly devoted to Christianity, Mutual Rights, Polite Literature, General Intelligence, Agriculture, and the Arts," (Adams 6) founded by the Reverend Thomas F. Norris. Fern received only fifty cents for her labor. Later, The True Flag of Moulton, Elliott & Lincoln published her works. Although the compensation she received was small, the fact that popular newspapers throughout the country reprinted her articles was a greater reward.

Fern's payment from the Boston papers somewhat increased with the assistance of
a New York lawyer, Oliver Dyer. Dyer, who purchased with Fern's younger brother Richard Storrs Willis The Musical World and Times (previously The Musical Times of New York), suspected that Fern received unfair treatment from her publishers. Dyer offered Fern a higher wage in an exchange for her writing exclusively for his paper. Dyer's proposal forced the Boston papers to increase Fern's pay. Moreover, Florence Bannard Adams affirms that in 1852 The True Flag "announced 'Fanny Fern's Department,' A Corner to herself made up of stinging bits of satire and witty hits on the foibles of the day" and that the column "was to follow the formula of a modern 'column.' A 'columnist,' [the editor of The True Flag defines] is a writer whose profit and enjoyment come from a shrewd, penetrating interest in observation of people and things. His comments must be timely and trenchant" (7). Fanny Fern embraced all subjects and discussed them well within the scope of her knowledge and perception. Her writing and her function as a columnist then perfectly fit her early editor's definition.

Fern's popularity simultaneously attracted James Cephus Derby, a New York publisher of Derby and Miller. He offered Fern a choice of either a lump sum for her copyright or a percentage from each book sold for her first collection Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port Folio (1853). Consulting her trusted friend Oliver Dyer, Fern agreed on the percentage which proved to be much more beneficial. The book immediately became a best seller in both the United States and England. In 1854, a second series of Fern Leaves from Fanny's Port Folio and Little Fern for Fanny's Little Friends appeared. Fern's three books sold "132,000 copies in the United States and 48,000 abroad; within two years she had received more than $10,000 in royalties" (Schlesinger 25).
James Parton, an "assistant-at-all-work" of The Home Journal as he called himself in Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume (54), admired Fern's style of writing, clipped and copied many of her articles in his boss's paper, without any suspicion that she was Nathaniel Parker Willis' sister. Receiving Fern's admirer's poem, James Parton forwarded it to Fern along with his letter saying: "Dear Unknown: New York is the place for you. You will find subjects here starting up in your path wherever you go. Come! Come! Come!" (James Parton 54). Whether inspired by James Parton's letter or fed up with Boston, Fanny Fern stopped writing for the Boston papers in the spring of 1853 and moved to a boarding house in New York the same year (Warren 109). Fern continued to write for The Musical World and Times until November 1853 and for a short time wrote for the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post.

In 1854, Fern accepted a contract to write a novel for Mason Brothers. The publisher's effective advertising campaign and the autobiographical nature of the novel, Ruth Hall, which, critics say, unjustly and viciously portrays some unpleasant characteristics of male members of Fern's family, created national controversy but propelled the sales of the book tremendously. Mary Kelly contends in Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America that fifty-thousand copies were sold within eight months (5). In 1855, William U. Moulton, a wrathful Boston publisher of The True Flag maliciously revealed the identity of Fanny Fern as a revenge for her termination of writing for his paper. He anonymously published The Life and Beauties of Fanny Fern portraying her as a luxurious, ungrateful, and flirtatious widow. The scandal arising from Ruth Hall and Moulton's fabricated biography tarnished
Fern's reputation, but she was determined to continue her challenging career.

Fern's determination to pursue a writing career is not entirely due to the success of the book sale. Many encouraging reviews she had received, at least in part, warrants a promising profession. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's admiration of Fern and *Ruth Hall* appears in *The Una* of February 1855. She writes, "If by any unfortunate blunder in society she awakes to the consciousness that her legal protectors are her tyrants . . . her honest indignation will ever and anon boil up and burst forth in defiance of all ties of blood and kindred" (29). A champion of Woman's Rights, Stanton contends, "The great lesson taught in *Ruth Hall* is that God has given to woman sufficient brain and muscle to work out her own destiny unaided and alone" (29). Nathaniel Hawthorne in a letter to William Ticknor, published in Caroline Ticknor's *Hawthorne and His Publisher*, indicates the great writer's high regard and approval of Fern's writing style despite his furious bombast at the "d—d mob of scribbling women." He wrote,

>The woman writes as if the devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. Generally women write like emasculated men, and are only distinguishable from male writers by greater feebleness and folly; but when they throw off the restraints of decency, and came before the public naked, as it were—then their books are sure to possess character and value. (142)

A large number of audience and numerous favorable reviews certainly invigorate Fern to have self-confidence and to perform her scribbling task in earnest.\(^\text{12}\)

In 1855, at the height of Fern's popularity, Robert Bonner contacted her to write a
story for The New York Ledger. Well known for his creative and expensive advertising strategies, Bonner was also generous in compensating his contributors. Having arrived in the United States at the age of fifteen in 1839, Robert Bonner, an ambitious Scotch-Irish immigrant, learned publishing and journalism from The Hartford Courant, The American Republican, and The New York Evening Mirror. In 1851, he purchased The Merchant's Ledger, a business paper, for five hundred dollars. He changed it into a successful family paper, sold it at three cents a copy, and miraculously increased its circulation from 2,500 in the first year to 180,000 in 1856. Eventually, the number reached 350,000 which made its property value equivalent to two million dollars when he retired and gave the business to his three sons (Kelly 4).

Realizing the significance of the authors' names, Bonner insisted that his contributors sign their works. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Henry Ward Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, E. D. E. N. Southworth, and many other popular names were on Bonner's payroll. Bonner attempted to persuade Fern to write for his paper many times, but she declined his offer. On June 9, 1855, however, Fanny Fern's serial story of ten installments, "Fanny Ford: A Story of Everyday Life" appeared in The New York Ledger. The compensation of a marvelous hundred dollars an issue made Fern the highest paid newspaper writer of her time. Undoubtedly, Bonner's securing Fern to write exclusively for his paper proved a wise investment because The New York Ledger's circulation reached 100,000 within a year of Fern's employment. From then on, Fern was a regular columnist, writing weekly for The New York Ledger at the rate of twenty-five dollars a column until her death in 1872.
Securely settled in her career, Fern was content, wealthy, and popular. She bought a new house on Oxford Street, Brooklyn. James Parton, the famous biographer of *The Life of Horace Greeley* (1855) had been her escort since she moved to New York. Being on the same side of resenting all pretenses and embarking on the same career, Fern and Parton enjoyed each other's company. After two and a half years of acquaintance, they were married at the First Presbyterian Church in Hoboken, New Jersey on July 5, 1856. Having had a bitter experience of poverty after her first husband's death, Fern had Parton sign a prenuptial agreement permitting her the rights to her property and at the same time warranting her two daughters' well-being in case of her death. Fern's third marriage, a relatively happy one, lasted till the end of her life.

After *Ruth Hall* (1855), Fern wrote *Rose Clark* (1856), the last long novel she ever attempted. Then she turned attention to writing on various topics in her newspaper columns. Fern later published collections of her works in *Fresh Leaves* (1857), *The Play-Day Book* (1857), *The New Story Book for Children* (1864), *Folly As It Flies* (1868), *Ginger-Snaps* (1870), and *Caper-Sauce* (1872). Fern died of cancer after battling it for six years on October 10, 1872. For sixteen years, however, she never missed writing a single column. In great pain and unable to use her right hand, she used her left. When losing an ability to use both hands, she dictated her works to James Parton. Grace Greenwood in "Fanny Fern--Mrs. Parton" admiringly comments on this point: "what habits of industry, what system, what thoughtfulness, what business integrity, what superwoman punctuality, and O Minerva--Higeia! what health!" (80)

Fanny Fern was buried next to her beloved and long-gone family, Charles
Eldredge and their two daughters in Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her grave's headstone, sponsored by Robert Bonner and designed by her daughter Ellen, inscribes only the name "Fanny Fern." Ellen believed that her mother’s popularity was eternal and nothing was needed to describe her then. Fern's fame, however, faded soon after her death because critics who had not read her works carefully mistakenly included her among the domestic sentimentalists. Ethel Parton, Fern's only granddaughter, underestimated the value of Fern's works and discarded her literary significance by writing in her essay of reminiscences "A New York Childhood: The Seventies in Stuyvesant Square" that Fern's works "were for the public of their day only . . . The leaves are heavy with sugar, and the sparkle has effervesced" (32). A reexamination of Fern's works, both novels and newspaper articles, is a necessity as they will shed light on Fern's development in her attitudes toward society, her commitment to a writing career, and most importantly, they will reflect nineteenth-century American lives, especially those of women, children, and the less fortunate with whom Fern relentlessly and vigorously concerned herself in advocating for their rights and welfare.
Notes

1 The two Acts prohibited "the building, equipping, loading, or preparing any vessel licensed, enrolled, or registered in the United States for procuring coolies from any Oriental country to be held for service or labor." For more information on restrictions against immigrants, see Roy L. Garis, Immigration Restriction: A Study of Opposition to and Regulation of Immigration into the United States (New York: MacMillan, 1927).

2 Thomas J. Schlereth also adds that the death rates resulting from accidents as roof collapses, runaway coal buggies, flooding, faulty explosives, and lung disease were appallingly high. Besides, unsanitary environments caused infectious diseases such as consumption, "an affliction of the respiratory system exacerbated by air pollution," which excessively increase the death toll. In addition, he contends, "diphtheria was unknown before industrialization," 50, 288.

3 A typical life of a servant is well documented in a letter of an Irish immigrant to her family: "I do well. I have fine food only I must work from 6 o'clock in the morning to 10 o'clock at night and I earned $13 a month." For more information, see Mary P. Ryan, Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present 3rd ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983) 170.


In my dissertation, I will refer to Sara Payson Willis Parton as Fanny Fern because Fern used this pen name throughout her life. She legally obtained its exclusive use in a Philadelphia court as well. The pen name Fanny Fern derives from Fern's recollections of her beloved mother Hannah Willis who enjoyed the sweet smell of aromatic ferns and who frequently collected and decorated them in the house in Fern's childhood years.

There are two biographies of Fanny Fern: Joyce W. Warren's *Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers UP, 1992) and Nancy A. Walker's *Fanny Fern* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993). Throughout my dissertation, I will rely heavily on Warren's definitive biography because it is thoroughly extensive and perceptively written. I am indebted to Warren for all the biographical information on Fanny Fern. I do not acknowledge *The Life and Beauties of Fanny Fern* (1855), supposedly written by William U. Moulton, as a reliable source of Fern's biography because of the writer's bias and malicious feelings to avenge Fern for discontinuing to write for his Boston paper.

The first name of each Parton family member will be mentioned in order to avoid any confusion.

According to Joyce W. Warren, there are actually two dates of Fern's second
marriage recorded. For a discussion regarding the confusion, see Warren's *Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman*, 325 n 16.

10 For an extensive and informative discussion on Farrington's schemes to obtain a divorce from Fern, see Warren's *Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman*, 86.


13 James Parton in *Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume* certifies Robert Bonner's
generosity to Fern and his appreciation of her utmost devotion. On January 10, 1868, Bonner wrote Fern a letter acknowledging her fourteen years of constancy and faithfulness to The New York Ledger and enclosed her a check to "remind you of the event." Moreover, James Parton states that "Every January thereafter, there came a note from the Ledger office like the following:

My dear Fanny:--This is a dark, dull day. If the enclosed check, as an indication of my appreciation of your services, should make the sky brighter in your firmament, I shall feel amply rewarded for having signed it.

Yours,

"Robert Bonner"

Bonner's friendship with Fern never fails. On her death, he dedicated a large sum of money for an elegant headstone in Mount Auburn Cemetery in her memory as well, 65-66.
CHAPTER II

A REVOLT AGAINST THE CULT

OF TRUE WOMANHOOD

You can't dam-n up a woman's feelings as you would a village stream. You can't choose her for her tender, womanly ways, and then expect when you get her home that she will "heads up" with an unwinking stare at you for further orders the rest of her life. If that's the wife you wanted, why not take one of those figures outside the store doors in Broadway, with a dress pinned on, which, when twirled round, stand stock still till they get another twirl?

They are headless, to be sure, but they are so docile!

Fanny Fern's "Two Kinds of Women,"

Ginger-Snaps (GS), 128.

Although mid-nineteenth-century America was rapidly industrialized and society as a whole greatly progressed, women's roles and status did not markedly improve. In fact, industrialization, which created a new society, enhanced "the development of a new set of values: individual achievement was held to measure individual worth, and wealth, power, and fame were taken to be measures of achievement" (Epstein 67). These values distinctively divided men's and women's roles. They "fit the aspirations of men of the
professional, entrepreneurial, and trading classes, but their women were being confined to domesticity and thus excluded from the concerns most valued in their own milieus" (Epstein 67). Men as financial providers labored outside the home. Women as childbearers ran domestic affairs. Home became a woman's "assigned place," Mary P. Ryan asserts, because it "was deemed a far better one than the rough-and-tumble world of war, works, politics; and woman's superior nature--pure, pious, and gentle--entitled her to reign there" (113). The segregation of men's and women's worlds into public and private spheres deepened women's dependence and selflessness.  

Society convinced women to value marriage over spinsterhood by insisting that matrimony was a suitable means to attain patriarchal protection as well as social respectability. Spinsterhood, on the other hand, was detested because it brought about, in most cases, poverty, contempt, and loneliness. 

Encouraged to be satisfied with a dependent role as "obedient" daughters and wives, women, as a matter of fact, were instructed not to desire anything for themselves. In other words, "The qualities that girls were to cultivate," Barbara Leslie Epstein points out, "stood in direct contradiction to the independence, ambition, and assertiveness that were elsewhere described as the glory of America" (74). Women, moreover, complyingly adopted the principal credence that they were the embodiments of the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Welter 152). Period manuals and guidebooks for young women and wives emphasized proper, conforming womanly behaviors and pious conduct. Most etiquette books, though generally intended for citizens of both sexes, were more seriously put into use in the education of young girls.
Ironically, it seems, society ruled by men would condone male "immoral" conduct such as premarital sex or infidelity after marriage, but would strongly insist on women's purity. Men's double standard was universally accepted as common practice.

Having experienced a life of a contented wife, struggling widow, and scandalous divorcee, Fanny Fern gradually but persistently exhibited her rebellion against a Victorian society that suppressed women mentally and physically in both her fictional and non-fictional works. Earlier in her journalistic career, Fern's articles suggest that her attitudes towards women's roles and status are in accord with those defined by Barbara Welter as the "Cult of True Womanhood." In summary, American women in the nineteenth century were to believe that "Religion belonged to women by divine right, a gift of God and nature. . . . Purity was as essential as piety . . . its absence as unnatural and unfeminine . . . Women were the passive, submissive responders . . . [and] the true woman's place was unquestionably by her own fireside [where] woman performed her great task of bringing men back to God" (Welter 152-62).

Love and submissiveness, Fern seems to suggest in her early works, constitute a happy home. A demanding husband in "How Husbands May Rule," asks his wife to give up friendship with her female friend who "is ladylike, refined, intellectual, and fascinating" because the strong-minded lady's "influence over one so yielding and impulsive as [his wife] is more to be dreaded, if unfavorable" (FL1, 116). The wife, obstinate at first, yields eventually because "Turn where she would, some proof of his devotion met her eye. . . one hair of his head was worth more to her than all the women in the world" (117-18). Fern's first successful and pleasant marriage may have
contributed to her concluding the story that "Love conquered!... Dear reader--won't you tell?--there are some husbands worth all the sacrifices (emphasis added) a loving heart can make!" (118-19). A similar notion of how a husband's love and understanding can turn his wife into a submissive woman is also apparent in Rose Clark (RC). Gertrude Dean, a woman once servile and yielding, but later turning imperious and independent, tells Rose Clark how her late husband's affection makes her welcome a submissive position: "What is this modern clamor about 'obedience' in the marriage relation? How easy to obey when the heart cannot yield enough to the loved one? Ah, the chain cannot fret when it hangs so lightly! I never heard the clanking of mine" (230).

That women should adopt a subservient stance, Fern argues, is a necessity for their own welfare and security. A newly-wedded wife in "Self Conquest" who bravely and quietly endures her annoying in-laws' interference in her household matters is graciously rewarded with a new home far from that of her in-laws. Her husband admits that he admires her tolerance when he has witnessed his "high-spirited little wife, struggling with trial, day by day, suffering, enduring, gaining the victory over her own spirit, silently and uncomplainingly" (FL1, 32). Submissiveness, Fern contends, recompenses magnanimously.

Women's inability to be assertive and their acceptance of inferior status as their husbands' possessions are well illustrated in "Mary Lee," and in the character of rich and beautiful Mary Leon in Ruth Hall (RH). Mary Lee has the misfortune of marrying a jealous husband, who "with the meanness of a revengeful spirit," lures her to be confined in a lunatic hospital "till the punishment [that she is born beautiful and attractive] should
be sufficiently salutary to warrant his recalling her home" (FL 1, 87). In the same manner, Mary Leon, whose beauty and wealthy husband are the sources of envy among other women, melancholically laments, "I have all those pretty toys to satisfy my heart-cravings; they, equally with myself, are necessary appendages to Mr. Leon's establishment" (RH 51). To her, a loveless marriage resembles a shackled confinement which perpetually destroys a young woman's life. Mary Leon's painful experience forces her to tell Ruth Hall that "When your daughters stand at the altar, Ruth, never compel them to say words to which the heart yields no response. The chain is none the less galling, because its links are golden" (RH 51). Mr. Leon, bored and impatient with his wife, cold-heartedly puts her in an insane asylum and conveniently sails to Europe.

Fern time and again points out that nineteenth-century married women lawfully and helplessly became dependent, selfless, and at times desperate. Well aware of their own sanity and of their husbands' wicked schemes, Mary Lee and Mary Leon (the repetition of names signifies any woman, it seems) could not possibly prove their cases against their husbands. Barbara Leslie Epstein asserts that according to the English Common law married women "were represented legally by their husbands; they were 'dead to the law'" (79). Both unfortunate women, finally committed to mental hospitals by their husbands, live out pitiful lives in solitude. The asylum, Fern emphasizes, "was [a place for] the fragile wife, to whom love was breath--being!--forgotten by the world and him in whose service her bloom had withered, insane--only in that her love had outlived his patience" (RH 109).

Although Fern readily admits that women's submissiveness does not always yield
the best results, and such docility often leads to hardships and misery, her articles from an earlier period do not provide any solution or suggest better alternatives than death for married women. Rather they portray a picture of submissive, suffering women who accept and endure their ill fate silently. Having witnessed her own mother’s victimization, Fern comments in "Woman’s Millennium":

well I remember when too young to know what life meant for a woman, hearing one who I have since learned had suffered and forgiven much, murmur to herself as she wearily laid her head upon her pillow, 'God be thanked for sleep and forgetfulness!' and yet not one who saw her smiling face... ever dreamed that she was not 'a contented wife,' as the phrase runs. (GS 82)

Guidebooks for women and wives instruct them how to behave and to please men, but most likely not many of these books convey the same message to men.

The same need for submissiveness is depicted in "A Business Man's Home; or a Story for Husbands," *Fresh Leaves* (FL). Mrs. Wade, failing to remember that married women are selfless, unconsciously expresses her view on how to raise children in the conversation between her husband and his friend. Ashamed of her unwelcome articulation, Mrs. Wade is "blushing the next moment that she had so far departed from 'The Married Woman's Guide,' as to question an opinion which her husband had indorsed by his silence" (FL 12-13). Mrs. Wade gradually loses her strength after long years of toiling tirelessly with household duties and attempting to please a domineering husband who "hate[s] argument; besides, women can't argue... everybody knows that" (FL 13) and who believes that "a woman is but a cipher up to the time she is married--her husband
then invests her with a certain importance, always subservient to his, of course" (28). Mr. Wade, refusing to believe that hard work and insufficient rest ruins his wife's health, pronounces, "Women . . . were always ailing, and fancying themselves dying" (33). Housewives' weariness from overwork and indifference from their husbands normally lead to two well-known avenues: insane asylums which "are full of women, who, leaning on some human heart for love and sympathy, and meeting only misappreciation, have gone there, past the Cross, where alone they could have laid down burdens too heavy to bear unshared" ("Women and Their Discontents," Folly As It Flies (FF), 57-58), and a cemetery of which its "tomb-stones, if they stated the actual causes of insanity and death, might convince the most skeptical" ("English Notions About Women," GS 93). To compensate their losses and to console themselves, men live on with new wives.

The expected submissiveness of wives and the unquestioning obedience expected of their daughters often yielded tragic results. The concept of providing young women with appropriate patriarchal protection forced parents to find mature, secure, and dependable suitors for their daughters, usually without any regard for the daughters' preferences or consent. Marriages of convenience, Fern contends, do not prosper. A couple, different in age, interest, and opinions, commonly part. Courageous women are willing to accept the stigma of divorcese when they can no longer tolerate unjust degradation; while many others, who are more conservative, acquiesce to their confinement in asylums, or else die prematurely. The widow Gertrude Dean in Rose Clark, needing economic stability for her child, plunges into a second marriage with a man "gross and unspiritual . . . so selfish and unchivalric" (283). Realizing that "It was
not the soul of which he desired possession," Gertrude "was wild with despair. O, the creeping horror with which I listened to his coming footsteps! . . . to sink back into my chair, and nerve myself with a calm voice and shrouded eye to meet his unacceptable caresses" (235). Although she accepts that she has "made a great mistake, and must bear the consequences with what fortitude I may," (243) Gertrude finally consents to be a divorcee instead of following her husband Stahl to a new residence. To her, a divorce is "the penalty I was to pay for the difference which nature and education had made between us" (243). Marriages of convenience, Fern contends, will never be fruitful.

In "Love and Duty," Fern Leaves, second series (FL2), Fern illustrates that a mother who relates to her daughter an emotional experience of her ignorant and immature love, successfully persuades her to terminate a clandestine relationship with a young lover. Parental judgment, however, Fern believes, is not always right. Lucy, a young maiden in "The Fatal Marriage" sacrifices her beautiful and vigorous adolescence in marrying Ezekiel, a man many years older than she is because "her father's word was law, and when Mr. Lee announced him as her future husband, she knew she was just as much Mrs. Ezekiel Clark, as if the bridal ring had been already slipped on her fairy finger" (FL2, 155). Lucy, submissively obeys "her father's orders, stood up in her snow-white robe, and vowed to 'love and cherish' a man just her father's age" (FL2, 156). The result of a loveless relationship is devastating: "Ezekiel soon wearied of his sick wife, and left her in one of these tombs for the wretched, an insane hospital" (FL2, 156). Lucy's untimely death bereaved her old father, but the grief can never rectify his mistake. Fern's message here runs against her contemporaries' opinions. Instead of suggesting that
women comply to the marital norm society sets as female protection, Fern demands that women be more assertive, value their own dignity as individuals, and denounce matrimony for security or survival if they do not wish to waste their fruitful lives. In other words, Fern urges that women be strong, brave, articulate, and independent.  

Consistent with her developing perspective, Fern’s attitudes toward women’s domestic roles gradually but unrelentingly change. She deviates from her earlier portrayal of women as self-sacrificing to that of self-realizing. Although Fern insists that women should be more aggressive and militant, she still values certain female qualities. She contends in “A Matrimonial Reverie” that women "may be as beautiful as Venus, and as talented as Madame de Stael, but [they] never’ll reign supreme in [their] liege lord’s affections, till [they] can roast a turkey" (FL2, 282). In addition, Fern harshly satirizes women who are fashionable but ignorant in household chores. She sarcastically writes in "The Model Lady" that such a woman is the one who

puts her children out to nurse and tends lap-dogs ... lies in bed till noon ... cuts her poor relations, and goes to church when she has a new bonnet ... turns the cold shoulder to her husband, and flirts with his ‘friend’... never saw a thimble ... don’t [sic] know a darning needle from a crow-bar ... wonders where puddings grow ... [and] runs mad after the last new fashion ... (FL1, 372)

To Fern, women, single or married, housewives or career holders, should be versatile and well-versed in household affairs.

The absolute submissiveness leading to women’s misery and death gradually disappears from Fern’s writings. She vigorously calls for men’s understanding, and at the
same time, insists that women value their own selves. It is difficult, Fern admits, to rebel against the tyranny of one's beloved husband. She illustrates in "A Matrimonial Reverie" that a woman who has "not dared to say my soul was my own since the day I was married," and who feels that "every time Mr. Jones comes into the entry and sets down that great cane of his, with a thump . . . my teeth chatter" intends to eradicate the fear of her husband and resist his authority. However, her recollections of "Such eyes! and such a nice mouth. Come to think of it, I really believe I love him!" enable her to proclaim "Guess I'll go along the old way!" (FL2, 278) The wife fails to be rebellious because of love, but love that paves the way to women's self-abnegation is perceptively not what Fern promotes as she progresses in her career.

Single or married, women as well as men, Fern affirms, should appraise their own individuality. Women who are determined to retain their unique personalities are to be admired. On the contrary, men show a lack of self respect when they try to remold their wives into little more than reflections of themselves. Fern's "Delightful Men" and "English Notions About Women" illustrate her abhorrence of arrogant and hypocritical men. A man who "is attracted to a woman of marked individuality of character," Fern argues in "Delightful Men," at first "admires her decision and self-poise, her energy and self-reliance... Directly upon possession... He disputes her positions and opinions with acidity, because they differ from his own, and therefore must be wrong" (GS 50-51). The woman Fern admires is valorous in sustaining her unique characteristics although her husband "uses sarcasm, ridicule, threats, everything which he thinks the 'head of the family' is justified in using." (GS 50) The husband later amazingly realizes that "year
after year, [his] fruitless effort goes on, to transform a full-grown tree to a little sapling . . . according to the moulder's capricious whim or fancy, with not the ghost of a result, so far as success is concerned" (GS 51). Strong and unyielding women are victorious because they have an ability to maintain their personal identity.

Although Fern perceives that the reality of men attempting to remodel and to suppress their wives is universal, she argues that women maintain their distinctive qualities. In "English Notions About Women," Fern scornfully condemns an English journal writer who tells his wife that "opposition and contradiction always makes him furious; then he stamps and roars and becomes dangerous: she must by all means avoid that" (GS 91). Believing that men are instinctively tyrants, Fern designates them "domestic Napoleons" who enjoy exploiting women. In "Women and Their Discontents," Fern points out, "In old times, many men married only to get their butter churned, their cheese made, their clothes mended, and their meals prepared, their wives raising pigs and children in the intervals" (FF 52). Men at present, Fern contends, are not much different because they similarly turn their wives into obedient slaves and productive childbearers. Women, then, have to protect themselves from falling into subservient and degrading positions.

Concerned with women's oppressive situations, Fanny Fern strongly and diligently defends women who prize their individuality and who do not allow themselves to be subjected to conformity and obedience. In "English Notions About Women," she writes, "if a man will marry, with such absurd ideas of what marriage ought to be, and if he will marry a fool . . . he deserves the consequences. But let him not insist that all women are
fools, because he got on his knees to obtain one" (GS 88). Sincerely admitting that not all
women have "a call to be a wife," Fern, however, bluntly tells men to stop complaining
about their wives. Postmarital dissatisfaction and discontent resulting from their own
decision should enable men to blame no one but themselves. Men who prefer
extravagant women should not be displeased with their wives being spendthrifts. In other
words, Fern maintains, "were these husbands about to possess a horse, they would
consider first whether they wanted a farm-horse or a fancy horse--a working animal or an
ornamented one. Having chosen the latter, they would be very careful to choose a
carriage of light weight for it to draw" ("Women and Their Discontents," FF 51). There
seems to be no alternative in restoring harmony in a household, Fern reasons, unless men
accept that when they "marry a humming-bird, [they] don't expect that marriage will
instantly convert it into an owl; and if you have caught it, and caged it, without thought of
consequences, don't[,] like a coward, shrink from your self-assumed responsibility, and
turn it loose in a dark wood, to be devoured by the first vulture" ("A Discourse Upon
Husbands," FF 14-15). Married men, Fern claims, should be committed to their marital
obligations and should carry out their duties as protectors and providers, not as
slaveholders.

It is essential, Fern asserts, that women are aware of the injustice that men and
society as a whole render to them. She insists in "Two Kinds of Wives." Caper-Sauce
(CS) that women "must take care of themselves . . . They must husband their strength for
future demands, since their husbands won't husband it" (56). Furthermore, Fern resolves
that "the great Law-giver made no distinction of sex . . . when he promulgated the seventh
commandment, nor should we. You tell me 'society makes a difference;' more shame to it--more shame to the women who help to perpetuate it" ("Blackwell's Island," CS 36). The domestic sphere, in fact, Fern argues, fetters women to "lives of unbroken monotony" and deprives them of freedom. It is only fair that women be entitled to "much more need of exhilarating influences than men, whose life is out of doors in the breathing, active world" (CS 34). All things considered, Fern queries, "if monotony is to be avoided in man's life as injurious, if 'variety' and exhilaration must always be the spice to his pursuits, how much more must it be necessary to a sensitively organized woman? . . . if home is not sufficient for him, why should it suffice for her?" (CS 35). It is not justifiable, Fern contends, that men should claim "of an evening of rest, away from home, where he should find light and warmth, and boon companionship" after his "hard day's work." ("Women's Need of Recreation," CS 180). Indeed, a woman deserves more recognition and refreshment, "since work, hard as her husband may, stands over the perpetual wash-tub or cooking-stove, with two or three half-grown children hanging to her draggled skirts, never exchanging her unwomanly rags" ("CS 180-81). In short, Fern proclaims, "It takes two to make home bright. Don't you suppose that a woman is as much perplexed and worried and sick of the practical, at the end of the day; as a man can be?" ("What Mary Thought of John," GS 286). Women, Fern argues, should no longer tolerate unfair treatment and should earnestly strive for an equal status to that of men.

To propagate her belief that women are not inferior to men, Fern encourages women to reexamine and reevaluate their self-esteem as well as their significance as human beings. Women, Fern argues in "My House in the Country," should not allow
themselves to wear "careworn, pallid faces," to show "the careless untidiness of dress," and to be "reduced to this utilitarian standard of cow and cabbage" (GS 38). Although it is women's "religion" to provide husbands and children "wholesome bread and meat," Fern exhorts them to "stop and take a little breath" because "Nobody will thank you for turning yourself into a machine." Besides, "When you drop in your tracks, they will just shovel the earth over you, and get Jerusha Ann Sombody [sic] to step into your shoes. They wont [sic] cry a bit" (GS 39-40). The message Fern conveys here is controversial because she advises women to realize their own importance, to "take a little comfort yourself as you go along . . . [to] look after 'No. 1'. Laugh more and darn less" and do not "let your children remember home as a charnel house, and you as its female sexton" (GS 40). In short, women must cease being slaves in their own homes.

That women need to be more articulative and rebellious, Fern argues, is mandatory. Not only did society issue the law to subjugate women, its various forms of authoritative restraints over the fair sex extended to manuals and guidebooks for young women and wives. In "Moral Molasses; or, Too Sweet by Half," Fern disdains guidebooks that aim to belittle women. She writes, 'The most thorough emetic I know of, is in the shape of "Guide to Young Wives," and kindred books . . . as if, when things go wrong, a wife had only to fly up stairs, read a chapter in the "Young Wife's Guide," supposed to be suited to her complaint, and then go down stairs and apply the worthless plaster to the matrimonial sore" (FL 210). Fern admits, 'I have no patience with such matrimonial nostrums . . . 'Always meet your husband with a smile.' That is one of them" (FL 210). In "Petting," Fern illustrates the degradation of the female sex thus: "Read any
of the thousand and one precious books on 'Advice to Women,' and you will see how we
are all to be up to time on the front-door step, ready to 'smile' at our husbands the minute
the poor dears come home, lest they lose heart and doubt our love for them" (CS 285).
Moreover, Fern adds, "Just so with advice to young girls. They must always be on hand
to mend rips in their brothers' gloves and tempers, and coddle them generally; but I have
yet to see the book which enjoins your brothers to be chivalric and courteous and
gentlemanly to their sisters, as they take pleasure and pride in being to other young men's
sisters" (CS 285).

Manuals for young wives or guidebooks for women, Fern asserts, help promote
women's submissiveness and self-abnegation. She believes, "These guidebooks are
mainly written by sentimental old maids; who, had they ever been within kissing distance
of a beard, would not so abominably have wasted pen, ink, and paper," or Fern continues,
"by some old bachelor, tip-toeing on the outskirts of the promised land, without a single
clear idea of its resources and requirements, or courage enough to settle there if he had"
("Moral Molasses; or, Too Sweet By Half," FL 212). Furthermore, in "A Discourse Upon
Husbands," Fern defies such matrimonial advice as that proposed by spinsters. She asks,
"Did you ever hear an old maid talk about matrimony? What pitying compassion she has
for married men, every one of whom is victimized because he did not select her to make
him 'the happiest of men'" (FF 22). Irritated by such women, Fern wishes that "all the
die-away old maids, who go . . . lecturing married women, and sniveling for their
privileges, had but one neck. and that some muscular coat-sleeve . . . would give them
one satisfying hug, and stop their nonsense" (FF 24). To Fern, a happy marriage is a
compromise. She contends, "As I look at it, as much to share each other's sorrows, as to share each other's joys; neither of the twain to shoulder wholly the one or the other . . . so shall you avoid hypocrisy and kindred bedevilments, and pull evenly in the matrimonial harness. I speak as unto wise men" ("Moral Molasses; or, Too Sweet By Half," FL 211).

Having experienced three marriages, Fern maintains that a joyful and satisfactory wedlock occurs not only because the couple are willing to adjust themselves to a married life, but also because they agree not to let their relatives interfere in their private life. In "Women and Their Discontents," Fern argues, "if there is anything in the world that makes a woman discontented and discouraged, it is to have some piece of ossified female perfection, in the shape of a relative, held up to her imitation by her husband" (FF 50). By the same token, Fern asks, "how would a man like his wife constantly to remind him of the very superior manner in which her grandfather conducted his business matters?" (FF 50-51). In other words, Fern proposes that men and women stand on the same ground as individuals, respect one another's identity, and mutually perform the duties necessary to maintain a pleasant, agreeable household.

Marital obligations, Fern contends, are to be lived up to by both husbands and wives. In appreciation of women's domestic performance, most men reward their wives with "a new bonnet, a dress, a shawl, a watch" ("A Discourse Upon Husbands," FF 12). Material provision, Fern argues, never equals emotional support because "what a true woman's heart most craves [are] sympathy, appreciation, [and] love" (FF 12). Some men, for example, Fern declares, do not have "a call to be a husband," and "half the married men should have their 'licenses' taken away" ("Women and Money," FL 247) since they
resemble farmers whose "uppermost idea" is "how to get the greatest possible amount of work out of their wives" ("Women and Their Discontents," FF 55). The farmers' cattle, Fern contends, are more fortunate than some women because they "are not allowed to be overworked, or underfed, or abused in any way" (FF 55).

Moreover, inconsiderate married men often humiliate their wives by complaining about expenses. In "Blue Monday," Fern writes, "If you look for consistency in the male creature, you'll need a microscope to find it. Your expenses hurt him dreadfully; when I say yours, I mean not only your personal expenses, but the house expenses" (GS 69). Not only should men stop grumbling about money matters, Fern argues, they should also "remember that it is very discouraging for any wife and housekeeper, when, for the same efficient labor which she expends under her own roof, she could earn for herself at least a competence, to be obliged to go as a beggar to her husband for the money which is justly her due" ("Cookery and Tailoring," CS 272). After all, Fern questions, "who was omnipresent in chamber, kitchen, parlor and nursery, keeping the domestic wheels in motion, that there should be no jar in the machinery?" She then concludes, "Nobody but a polar bear or a Hottentot would wait to have a wife 'ask' for 'money'!" ("A Lady on Money Matters," FL 383).

Instead of marginalizing women, Fern proposes that men provide their assistance to elevate women's status to be equal to their own. In "English Notions About Women," Fern requests men to ask themselves "with regard to women--to wives" and answer in "a manly, honest manner, whether it is condemnatory of their own 'line of conduct' or the contrary" the question: "Should I be willing to endure what I expect my wife to bear, were
I a woman and a wife? If not--is it just, or right, or manly, then, for me to expect it of her? (GS 92). Relationship in a marriage will be healthier, Fern asserts, if men are not "disgustingly selfish. Absorbing, but never giving out--accepting, but seldom returning" ("Delightful Men," GS 49). Believing that women will not remain submissive forever, Fern warns domineering men that oppressive women will "break into what is called 'unwomanly' rebellion, when their sense of justice is outraged, by the love which has proved weaker than pride" ("Delightful Men," GS 51).

Emotional support and sympathetic awareness, Fern indicates, characterize married men. Although women are vulnerable to verbally and mentally abusive treatment from their husbands, they are unable to attain protection from the law. Admiring Thackeray who writes, "A husband may kill a wife gradually, and be no more questioned than the grand seignor who drowns a slave at midnight," Fern declares, "I honor you for 'turning state's evidence' against your own culprit-sex. The laws over here allow husbands to break their wives' hearts as much as they like, so long as they don't break their heads" ("Household tyrants," FL2, 245). The alternative women have, Fern contends, "is to allow [husbands] to scratch our faces, and then run to the police court, and show 'his Honor' that Mr. Candle can 'make his mark.'" She, moreover, adds, "if we are not cunning, we should get circumvented all the time by these domestic Napoleons" (FL2, 245). In addition, Fern defines the brutal acts of hard-hearted husbands' "legal murder." In "Blue Monday," Fern clarifies, "if a woman is knocked on the head with a flat-iron by her husband and killed, or if arsenic is mixed with her food, or if a bullet is sent through her brain, the law takes cognizance of it" (GS 70). But, she continues, "what
of the cruel words that just as surely kill, by constant repetition? What of the neglect? What of the diseased children of a pure, healthy mother?" (GS 70). After all, Fern wonders, "Is the self-sacrifice and self-abnegation all to be on one side? Is the 'weaker' always to be the stronger in this regard?" (GS 70). Furthermore, Fern disapproves of the belief that women's untimely deaths are in the benevolent guidance of God or nature. She protests, "I could write flaming words about 'the inscrutable Providence which has seen fit to remove our dear sister in her youth from the bosom of her young family'... Providence did nothing of the sort" (GS 70). Besides, Fern argues, "I imagine Providence meant that women, as well as men, should have a right to their own lives. That they, equally with men, should rest when they can go no further on the road without dying" (GS 70).

A gradual deterioration of married women is horrifyingly prevalent, and Fern portrays their miserable lives. In "Our Nelly," the theme of women mistreated by their spouses and unprotected by the law recurs. Nelly, a submissive woman, is compared to "a bird in a darkened cage" (FL2, 216). She "made no objection to [her husband's] most absurd requirements; but her step lost its spring, her eye its sparkle; and one might listen long for her merry-ringing laugh" (FL2, 216). Disappointed and frustrated that "There is no law to protect woman from negative abuse!... no mention made in the Statute book (which men frame for themselves), of the constant dropping of daily discomforts which wear the loving heart away," Fern points out that if a woman "can show no mark of brutal fingers on her delicate flesh," the world believes that her husband "has fulfilled his legal promise to the letter—to love, honor and cherish her" (FL2, 216). In fact, Fern affirms,
I know scores of bright, intelligent women, alive to their finger-tips to everything progressive, good and noble, whose lives, hedged in by custom and conservatism, remind me of that suggestive picture in all our Broadway artist-windows, of the woman with dripping hair and raimant, clinging to the fragment of rock overhead, while the dark waters are surging round her feet. ("Blue Monday," GS 72)

Having witnessed "the long procession of bent, hollow-eyed, broken-spirited women who are legally murdered," Fern concludes that it reminds her of "the old rhyme" which well illuminates women's situation:

Look out for thyself,
And take care of thyself,
For nobody cares for thee. (GS 72)

Women, in other words, must learn to protect themselves, to reevaluate men's roles and status, and most importantly to rely on themselves economically so as to accept the condition of spinsterhood if appropriate suitors cannot be obtained.

It is significant, Fern argues, that women need to change their attitudes about men, especially about husbands. Reasonable love, loyalty, and respect should replace the revered feelings toward husbands that society asks of wives. In "Awe-ful Thoughts," Fern ridicules her contemporaries' concept of an almost-like-god status of husbands:

"'Awe'! . . . awe of a man whose whiskers you have trimmed, whose hair you have cut, whose cravats you have tied . . . who has hooked your dresses, unlaced your boots . . . whom you have buttered, and sugared, and toasted, and tea-ed; whom [you] have seen asleep with his mouth wide open! Ri-diculous!" (FL 107-108). Moreover, Fern asserts,
some men's selfish and unmanly nature make them unrespectful and despicable. In "What Mary Thought of John," she writes, "for every man now, who proves untrue to his better nature, his wife is to be held responsible..."The woman thou gavest to be with me'--she did thus and so . . ." (GS 289). Therefore, Fern continues, "all the Adams from that time down, have whimpered[,] torn their hair, and rushed forth to the long-coveted perdition, over the bridge of this cowardly excuse" (GS 289).

Finding it inappropriate and unreasonable to revere husbands or to accept their superiority, Fern, moreover, resents men who do not acknowledge women's importance, or those who ignore women's existence. She satirizes such men in "Indulgent Husbands" that "A husband should always wrap himself in a mantle of dignity--never step off his pedestal to be communicative or facetious" because "you ought to be on your guard" (FL1, 373). A husband, Fern continues, should make his wife ask him "a question a dozen times over, to show her that you have a few other topics under consideration besides those she suggests; and don't, for mercy's sake, ever ask her opinion about anything" (FL1, 373). Fern then concludes her satirical advice for men: "Women are like children; they won't bear petting. It makes them saucy as the mischief!... It stands to reason a man can't be trifled with that way. A lord of creation, too!" (FL1, 373).

Not only does Fern call her readers' attention to the reexamination of men's roles, but she also reveals an illusive romantic notion of marriage. In "Aunt Hetty on Matrimony," Fern illustrates to young women how most men turn out as husbands. She writes, "stop building up air-castles" because "Love is a farce; matrimony is a humbug; husbands are domestic Napoleons, Neroes, Alexanders--sighing for other hearts to
conquer, after they are sure of yours" (FL1, 377). Moreover, Fern contends, "The
honeymoon is as short-lived as a lucifer-match; after that you may wear your wedding-
dress at breakfast, and your night-cap to meeting, and your husband wouldn't know it" (FL1, 377). After marriage, Fern continues, if a woman is financially dependent on her husband, she will definitely experience embarrassment when she "ask[s] him to leave [her] a 'little money,' he looks at [her] as if to be sure that [she is] in [her] right mind, draws a sigh long enough and strong enough to inflate a pair of bellows, and asks [her] 'what you want with it, and if a half-a-dollar won't do?" (FL1, 378). Having experienced such a degrading status herself, Fern expresses her concern, "O, girls! set your affections on cats, poodles, parrots or lap-dogs; but let matrimony alone. It's the hardest way on earth of getting a living" (FL1, 379). However, Fern accepts an irresistible influence of love that "I'll warrant every one of you'll try it the first chance you get; for, somehow, there's a sort of bewitchment about it. I wish one half the world were not fools, and the other half idiots" (FL1, 379).

Fern further satirizes the conventional notion of marriage that promotes women's sufferings. In "Sunshine and Young Mothers," she comments, "young mothers and sunshine!" They are worn to fiddle strings before they are twenty-five!... my mind is quite made up about matrimony; it's a one-sided partnership" because while a wife does a lot of work at home such as tending to babies and performing household chores, Fern contends that a husband "gets into the omnibus, looks at the pretty girls, and makes love between the pauses of business during the forenoon generally" (FL2, 144). She exclaims, "Sunshine and young mothers!" Where's my smelling bottle?" (FL2, 145). In addition,
Fern criticizes the notion that marriage is an ultimate aim a woman must aspire to. She writes "The Tear of a Wife" as an answer to a comment "The tear of a loving girl is like a dew-drop on a rose; but on the cheek of a wife, is a drop of poison to her husband" (FL1, 324). She states, "Matrimonial tears 'are poison'. You must not cry!... Smile! It flatters your husband. He wants to be considered the source of your happiness, whether he was baptized Nero or Moses!" (FL1, 324). Finally, Fern asks, "What have you to cry for? Aint you married? Isn't that summum bonum--the height of feminine ambition?...
You've arriv [sic]!--got to the end of your journey! Stage puts up there! You have nothing to do but retire on your laurels, and spend the rest of your life endeavoring to be thankful that you are Mrs. John Smith! 'Smile!' you simpleton!" (FL1, 324).

Not believing that marriage should be the ultimate goal in a woman's life to help elevate her status or to secure her stability, Fern perceives a new kind of woman of a more intellectual and independent nature. She writes in "A Little Talk With The Other Sex," that in her opinion, "the 'coming' woman's Alpha and Omega will not be matrimony. She will not of necessity sour into a pink-nosed old maid, or throw herself at any rickety old shell of humanity, whose clothes are as much out of repair as his morals" (FF 264). The 'coming' woman, Fern predicts, "is not to throw aside her needle; neither is she to sit embroidering worsted dogs and cats, or singing doubtful love ditties, and rolling up her eyes to 'the chaste moon'" (FF 265). The 'coming' woman, Fern argues, "shall be no cold, angular, flat-chested, narrow-shouldered, sharp-visaged Betsey" (FF 265). Rather, she shall be "a bright-eyed, full-chested, broad-shouldered, large-souled, intellectual being; able to walk, able to eat, able to fulfill her maternal destiny, and able--
if it so please God—to go to her grave happy, self-poised and serene, though unwedded” (FF 265). A marriage, according to Fern, does not have any significance if women are independent and self-satisfied.

After all, Fern argues, spinsters may lead a much more contented and healthier life than married women. In an answer to a young woman unable to decide whether she should marry an old bachelor, Fern is opinionated when she writes: "Don't do it" ("A Question and Its Answer," FL 283). To her, a man who "for so long a period has had nobody but himself to think of, who knows where the finest oysters and venison steaks are to be found, and who has for years indulged in these and every other little selfish inclination unchecked" will "make a most miserable help-meat" because he "will be as unbending as a church-steeple--as exacting as a teething baby" (FL 283). Strongly, Fern insists, "Take my advice . . . give the old fossil the mitten, and choose a male specimen who is in the transition state, and capable of receiving impressions" (FL 283). A woman, moreover, should not marry a man with a character so much different from her own. In "Owls Kill Humming-Birds," she writes, "if you have the bump of mirthfulness developed, don't marry a tombstone . . . your brain full of merry fancies. There he sits! stupid--solemn--and forbidding" ("FL1, 397). "Altogether," Fern continues, "he's about as genial as the north side of a meeting house . . . You revel in the sunbeam; he likes the shadows" (FL1, 397). Fern finally warns young lively women, "make no such shipwreck of yourself. Marry a man who is not too ascetic to enjoy a good, merry laugh. Owls kill humming-birds!" (FL1, 397). To Fern the fact that "there were but one man in existence," would not force her to marry him because she believes "the limited supply would not
increase the value of the article" ("Who Would Be the Last Man?" (FL2, 95). Again, Fern maintains that a single but contented woman may be more fortunate than the one who is married but broken-hearted.

To Fern, however, some men, young or old, are not much different. A narrow-minded man, Fern argues, "does not desire a wife who knows much. He would like one who will be always on tiptoe to await his coming... who loves more than she reasons... who adjusts everything with a smile; although he may use his boots for other purposes than that of locomotion" ("A Little Talk With 'The Other Sex'," FF 253). An ideal wife that a man wants, Fern contends, is "Any young lady very weak in the head, and strong in the nerves, and quite destitute of any disgusting little selfishness" (FF 253). If in a marriage, a woman needs to sacrifice her own integrity, Fern asserts, spinsterhood should be a more preferable status than that of a submissive wife.

The new woman, Fern speculates, will be brave and determined to eliminate men's double standard, especially that which concerns women's purity. She expresses in "First Pure," that she believes "virtuous women must begin it, by turning the cold shoulder to every man of their acquaintance whom they know to be immoral," and "a woman of penetration will not be at fault, if she takes pains to sift a man's sentiments in conversation" (FL 81). It is unfair, Fern contends, that a man who "having wasted his youth in excesses, looks around him at the eleventh hour for a 'virtuous young girl'" ("To Gentlemen: A Call To Be A Husband," FL 305). Promoting a good health and sincerity, Fern urges, "Let both be equally pure; let every man look upon every woman, whatsoever her rank or condition, as a sister whom his manhood is bound to protect" ("Blackwell's
Island," CS 36). As a matter of fact, Fern argues, a man who condemns any woman's
"faults and follies" is more or less responsible for such misconduct and should ask
himself "what he, individually, has done to form and perpetuate them?" ("Two Kinds of
Wives," CS 57). It is only fair, Fern contends, to employ the same standard in judging
both sexes. Instead of "join[ing] her, and walk[ing] with her, well-pleased, in her own ill-
selected path," a man should contemplate "if ever, in his whole life, when he saw a
woman wronging her better self in any way, he extended a manly, brotherly hand to her,
in the endeavor to lead her right?" (CS 57). In short, Fern wonders, "does man never
think, in his better moments, how much nobler it were to protect than to debase woman?
... withdraw her, as with a brother's hand, from the precipice over which misery or
inclination would plunge her." ("First Pure," FL 82) This act of assistance and guidance,
to Fern, will enable a man to "prove to the 'weaker sex' that he is in the noblest sense the
stronger," and "That, indeed, were God-like" (FL 82).

Although Fern's fictional and non-fictional works illustrate that she values piety,
purity, and domesticity as a "true" woman's priceless virtues, her persistent and
unrelenting rebellion against women's submissiveness is apparent. The future woman,
Fern perceives is more independent and does not regard marriage as a priority or as an
economic stability she needs to aspire to. The woman is finally awakened to the reality of
a married life and of human nature that will change through time. Women, young or old
from all walks of life, will gradually become active in taking action for their own well-
being: to have a choice to choose from, not to wait to be chosen any longer. The action of
making choices, Fern contends, is the strongest and most meaningful message women can
send to men; that is, women, as human beings, are equal to men.
Notes

1 Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) maintains that a married woman became a man's vassal, his 'half,' while a husband was the economic head demanding his wife's obedience, virginity, and a rigorous fidelity, 429. Mary P. Ryan in Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present 3rd ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983) contends that Victorian women completely entrusted their well-being in their husbands' hands and that less than five percent of married women would enter the labor force to help contribute to the household income. American capitalism, at least in part, set a new standard of womanhood. Since economic production was removed from the household, women were identified primarily with domestic and maternal functions divorced of political and economic world. They were as well required to be passive and dependent in an exchange for economic stability, 12, 139. Barbara Leslie Epstein in The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1981) also contends that guidebooks for women helped propel the belief of the ideology of femininity that women were required to provide care for children and that domesticity would shield women from the evil of the outside world as well as bring them status and power, mediated through their families, 81. Catherine Beecher in The American Home (New York, 1869) clearly states that women's proper place was within the home and their primary duties were to take care of husbands and children. For more information on the separation of men's and women's spheres, see Catherine Clinton, The Other Civil War: American Women in The Nineteenth Century (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984) 46-53,

Mary P. Ryan in *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* 3rd ed. asserts that guidebooks for young women in the nineteenth century advised women to "maintain a warm, demure, and chaste demeanor" to attract men into holy matrimony so that they could "escape the odium of being an old maid," 138. For more information on women's preferences of patriarchal protection to spinsterhood, see Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984) 302.

Rosalind Rosenberg in *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1982) discusses at length that nineteenth-century young women were expected to perform their womanly duties in the roles of wives and mothers, but they were not encouraged to pursue higher education than necessary because it was a belief at that time that too much education would destroy their health. Besides, some period doctors argued that women's supposedly weaker physique and brain would gradually diminish if they were exposed excessively with worldly affairs outside their domestic dominion. For more information on the claim of negative effect of higher education on women, see Edward H. Clark, *The Building of A Brain* (Boston, 1874).

The authors of manuals and guidebooks on domesticity, marriage, and wives' duties usually had similar backgrounds as ministers, educators, doctors, or educated women with leisure to write. They principally agreed that women were to be pious and submissive. William Andrus Alcott in *The Young Wife, or Duties of Woman in the*
Marriage Relation (Boston, 1837) points out that submissiveness, kindness, cheerfulness, delicacy, modesty, simplicity, love of home, purity of character, forbearance, contentment, and moral influence on the husband were the distinguishing characteristics that a wife must possess to be able to complete her mission as a true woman and well-beloved wife. John C. Abbott in The Mother At Home (Sterling: Grace Abounding Ministries, Inc., 1978) also emphasizes women's responsibilities as moral guides for their husbands and children. Besides, women must be selfless and orient themselves toward their husbands' desires. It is their priority to maintain smooth, harmonious family relations, whatever the cost to themselves.

Barbara Welter in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" (American Quarterly 18.2 (1966): 151-74) defines the phrase "True Womanhood," which was frequently used by authors on the subject of women in the mid-nineteenth century, that its tenets covered the four ideal attributes of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity." Welter also asserts that fame, achievement, or wealth are all "ashes" if women do not possess such virtues. On the other hand, women embodying these characteristics are "promised happiness and power." Welter, moreover, emphasizes submissiveness as the greatest virtue of all.

Barbara Leslie Epstein in The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America elaborating on women's legal rights suggests that not until the second half of the nineteenth century was the status of married women improved by "the passage of a series of state Married Women's Property Acts, spurred in part by pressure exerted by the feminist movement and probably in part by the dismay felt
by wealthy fathers at the prospect of their daughters losing title to their inheritances through marriage—and perhaps losing them altogether through divorce or desertion," 80.

Critics in Fern's period and at present have not failed to perceive Fern's strong desire to encourage women to be independent, particularly in financial aspects because she believed that economic stability would certainly make women more valued, respected, and recognized as individuals in society. For more information on criticism of Fern's attitudes toward independent women, see Joyce Warren, Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1992), Florence Bannard Adams, Fanny Fern, or A Pair of Flaming Shoes (West Trenton: The Hermitage Press, Inc., 1966), and Mary Kelly, Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Oxford UP, 1984).

In "To The Ladies: A Call To Be A Wife," Fresh Leaves, 307-309, Fern condemns a woman who "cries for a cashmere shawl when her husband's notes are being protested," who "expects her husband to swallow diluted coffee, soggy bread, smoky tea, and watery potatoes," who "'has a headache' whenever her husband wants her to walk with him, but willingly wears out her gaiter boots promenading with his gentlemen friends," and to whom a good husband's society is not the greatest of earthly blessings, and a house full of rosy children its best furnishing, and prettiest adornment." It is important to note that although Fern calls for women to take rebellious actions against men's attempts to control them in a subservient role, her insistence on a woman's impeccable domestic performance is persistent throughout her career.

According to the author of "The Social Condition Of Woman" (North American
Review 42 (1836): 489-513, Father Feijoo in his *Defence of Women* points out that the Koran does not affirm that women have no souls, but the intellectual and spiritual degradation of woman is deduced from this silence more than from any positive text. Moreover, the author of this article contends that Christianity, in fact, elevates the social condition of woman.

10 In "To Gentlemen: A Call To Be A Husband," *Fresh Leaves*, 305-307, Fern disdains a man who, "believing that the more the immortal within us is developed in the world, the higher we shall rank with heavenly intelligences in the next, yet deprecates for a wife a woman of thought and intellect, lest a marriage with such should peril the seasoning of his favorite pudding, or lest she might presume in any of her opinions to be aught else than his echo," and who, when the rosy maiden he married is transformed by too early an introduction to the cares and trials of maternity, into a feeble, confirmed invalid, turns impatiently from the restless wife's sick room."
CHAPTER III

THE CULTIVATION OF WOMEN'S INTELLECT
AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

I want to hear no nonsense about the mental "equality or inequality of the sexes." I am sick of it; that is a question men always start when women ask for justice, to dodge a fair answer. They may be equal or unequal—that's not what I am talking about. Napoleon the Third gives his dear French people diversions... and folly of all kinds, if they will only let him manage the politics. Our domestic Napoleons, too many of them, give flattery, bonnets and bracelets to women, and everything else but—justice that question is one for them to decide, and many a gravestone records how it is done.

Fanny Fern's "Discourse Upon Husbands,"

Folly As It Flies (FF), 31.

The widespread growth of education in mid-nineteenth-century America was in accord with the rapid industrial development of the country. Boys and girls were encouraged to attend the burgeoning public school system in both primary as well as secondary levels. Women's education, in particular, was much more developed than that
in the period before 1800. Mary P. Ryan in Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present asserts that "females achieved the same high rate of literacy acquired by their brothers in the Revolutionary era" (135). However, Mary Kelly argues that "women's educational experiences went no further than home and seminary, and no future was promised beyond the web of domesticity" (56). The belief in the Cult of True Womanhood prevailed and influenced most women to be properly prepared for their preordained duties in the domestic sphere. Arthur W. Calhoun contends that women were "prescribed strong doses of reading, mostly religious books" and "Too much time was given to frothy accomplishments, to dress, to romance and unreality," while "too little [was allotted] to a substantial intellectual development that would have enabled [a woman] to interest and hold her husband and to escape from stagnation and inefficiency" (88). After all, society did not regard the education of women as of equal importance to that of men. In other words, the woman remained "more a symbol of virtue than a fount of wisdom" (Kelly 61).

Dissatisfaction with the shallow curriculum prepared for girls provoked many assertive and educated women to demand improvement in women's education generally. They called for opportunities for girls to be enrolled in colleges with curriculum similar to that of men's despite persistent discouragement from narrow-minded opposition.

Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of Godey's Lady's Book, campaigned not only for high schools for girls in the 1840s and 1850s but also demanded federally supported colleges for girls in the 1860s. Hale's argument was based on "the need for more teachers in a society that planned to provide universal free elementary education" for its population
In 1833, Oberlin College opened as a coeducational institution. It granted the first three arts degrees to women in 1841. Arthur W. Calhoun contends that it was the only institution to receive women on substantially the same conditions as men for almost twenty years (113-14). Antioch College was also coeducational and opened in 1853. Vassar College, established in 1865, promised its students an education as rigorous as that provided in the men's colleges (Rosenberg 4). However, equal opportunities for women's higher education were not truly established. The first woman who presented herself for the Harvard medical course in 1848 was ejected. Moreover, the decision of the Regents of the State of New York in 1855 permitting a woman's college to grant degrees and offer courses of the same nature as those designed for men horrified presidents of many institutions (Calhoun 90). Not until the late nineteenth century did most female colleges truly succeed in establishing curricula based upon those in men's universities.

Well-educated and well-aware of the importance of education, Fanny Fern devotes many of her newspaper columns and novels to persuading women, single or married, to attain the highest education possible. In "To Young Girls," Fern argues that a young woman's "yearning for some one to love [her], and [her] only, is natural and right; it is a great need of every woman's heart. But there is a time for everything" (FF 245). If girls hastily choose to be married before they are properly educated, they will certainly learn that "studying after marriage is tedious work" (FF 245). Besides, Fern asserts, "When is your mind to be informed, or to grow, if you place it in a hot-house, that only the flower of Love be forced into early bloom, to the dwarfing of every other faculty? (FF
An uneducated wife and mother will eventually become a bore to both husband and children. Fern asks, "how long, think you, before your husband would weary of a wife who only knew enough to talk about dress or dancing? . . . How painful, when your only charm, youth and its prettiness, has faded, to find your husband gradually losing sight of you, as his mind expanded, and yours grew still narrower" (FF 245). Worst of all, the evidence of one's ignorance will surface when one "chance[s] to have intelligent guests at [one's] house" and one is forced to sit and listen in silence. "How painful," Fern continues, "as time passes on, and your children grow up about you, to hear them talk intelligently on subjects of which you scarcely knew the names" (FF 245). Concerned with the young women's future, Fern urges that they not "let the bloom and freshness of your heart be brushed off in silly flirtations. Study all you can and keep your health. Render yourself truly intelligent" (FF 246). Essentially, Fern's message is that young girls should not "hurry into life's cares and responsibilities till your soul and body were fitted to carry you patiently, and hopefully through them" (FF 247).

Although married, Fern argues, women should not allow themselves to be engulfed and fettered by the increase of responsibilities as housewives and mothers. Society is unjust to consider that a woman's education is "to be finished when she is married, whereas she has only arrived at ABC" ("Discourse Upon Husbands," FF 29). If "a missing button or string is often the cause of a bitter outcry," Fern contends, "what of the little woman who sits twiddling her thumbs in the presence of her husband's intelligent visitors, because she has not the slightest idea what they are all talking about, and if she wouldn't mortify her husband, she must forever keep speechless?" (FF 29).
Marriage, in other words, should not put an end to women's education. On the contrary, married women must be determined to acquire broader and higher education to fulfill their roles as intellectual companions to their husbands and as moral and academic guides to their children. In short, a worthy wife is "one who could have sympathised [sic] with [her husband] and shared his intellectual pursuits; who would have been something besides a toy to amuse an idle hour, or to minister to his physical necessities" ("Shadows and Sunbeams," FL2, 31).

Fern argues that most married women are eager to grow intellectually, to be more respected for their knowledge. She contends, "I sincerely believe that there are few women with a desire for intellectual improvement, who cannot secure it if they will . . . if they felt inclined, furnish the inside of their heads more profitably" ("Women and Their Mistakes," FF 72). However, Fern admits, it is not an easy task for married women with many children to appropriate their time for intellectual growth. As a response to a message of one writer who tells young wives to "Ponder every subject with careful attention, if you wish to acquire knowledge," Fern says, "What is then to be the mental status of that mother who has a perpetual baby in her arms, and only time to "ponder" that baby, so weary is her body with its "ponder"--osity?" ("My Dreadful Bump of Order," CS 152). Since "the baby will grow up by and by," Fern asks, "how is [a mother] to acquire "knowledge" under such circumstances, and be a fit intellectual companion for it then?" (CS 152). A mother's chances to acquire more knowledge seem to diminish "when little brothers and sisters tread so fast on each other's heels, that the mother has scarcely breathing time between" (CS 152). Eventually, Fern argues, a mother will realize how
much she has sacrificed when she "remembers sadly the advantages of education she had, as she looks into the fair faces of her girls . . . At what point in their young lives will they, chafing, let go the irresolute hand, that could only lead them up and down that narrow garden-path, when the broad highway of development lay in sight, and untrodden?" ("Variety of Human Nature," GS 162). However limited the leisure a woman has, Fern insists on her taking up good books because they "are safe, pleasant and economical company. The time spent with them is an investment which will not fail to yield a satisfying interest for all future time" ("A Little Talk with 'The Other Sex,'" FF 267).

It is essential, Fern argues, that husbands perceive the importance of their wives' education and consider themselves responsible for supporting their educational goals. In "Discourse Upon Husbands," Fern contends that a man who marries a woman of lower academic background than himself tends to believe that "this difference did not exist, or if it did, the glamour of youth and beauty, like a soft mist-veil over a landscape, hid, or, clothed with loveliness, even defects" (FF 30). "It is a shame," Fern points out, "for such a man to put on his soul's festival dress for everybody but her who should be his soul's queen. It is a shame for a man to be willing so to degrade the mother and teacher of his children" (FF 30). Out of their insensitiveness, Fern posits, men wound their wives' feelings by leaving them "far behind . . . in mental improvement" ("Women and Their Discontents." FF 63). Moreover, Fern asserts, "It is pitiable to see a husband without a thought that he might and should occasionally, have given his wife a lift out of the petty, harrowing details of her woman's life, turn from her, in company, to address his conversation to some woman who, happier than she, has had time and opportunity for
mental culture" (FF 63). A sensible and understanding husband would notice "how [his wife's] cheek flushes, and her eye moistens, and her heart sinks like lead as [he] thus wound her self-respect" (FF 64). Conclusively, Fern tells an ignorant husband, "had you recognized that [a wife] had a soul as well as yourself, how much sunshine you might have thrown over her colorless life!" (FF 63).

Women's capability for intellectual improvement and their eagerness to accomplish that aim, Fern argues, are prevalent. In "Women's Millennium," she warrants that she has never gone "into the country for a few weeks' summer holiday, that [she does] not find large-hearted, large-brained women, stowed away among the green hills, in little cottages . . . women who, amid the press of house and garden work, find time for mental culture; whose little book-shelves hold well-read copies of our best authors" (GS 85). Reading, however, Fern attests, is not the only means to cultivate women's intellect. Successful as a creative and prolific writer, Fern vigorously encourages women to write. She contends, "Write! Rescue a part of each week at least for reading, and putting down on paper, for your own benefit, your thoughts and feelings" ("Women and Their Discontents," FF 64). Writing, to Fern, is a way to relieve women's minds and "a safe outlet" to express themselves. Since "Griddles and darning-needles are getting monotonous," Fern argues that writing will be "improvement and solace" to women whose lives are "barren" and "loveless" (FF 61). "Write!" Fern continues, "if it will make that life brighter, or happier, or less monotonous" (FF 61). Women, particularly married ones, should not be "mentally annihilated" by "unhappy womanhood" or allow themselves to be mere machines which are "wound up by the marriage ceremony" and
"expected to click on with undeviating monotony till Death stops the hands" (FF 64-65).

Active and articulate women will survive and live their lives to the utmost.

Women's opportunities to be academically cultivated, however, Fern admits, rely at least in part on men's wilful support and encouragement. Men, fathers or husbands, should seriously provide all possible means to better the lives of women in their household through education. Repeatedly, Fern maintains that many open-minded husbands are willing to help educate their wives. Although the latter have "but average intellect," most husbands, Fern argues, "will soon be astonished at the progress of [their] pupil [s]" ("Discourse Upon Husbands," FF 31). The assumption that men's sphere is different from that of women's as apparent in the exclusion of women from men's gatherings truly irritates Fern. She contends, "gentlemen's dinner parties, including half a dozen invitations, to the exclusion of every lady, except the hostess, are becoming so common" ("Women and Their Mistakes," FF 74). The more appropriate way to help cultivate women, Fern argues, is to include both "gentlemen and their wives" in invitations to dinner. "If the latter are fools," Fern contends, "they will not become less so by being excluded from rational conversation. If they are not fools, it is an outrage to treat them as if they were" (FF 74). Chances for women's intellectual growth will increase, Fern maintains, when men, women, and society as a whole cooperate.

Not all men, however, Fern contends, are willing to provide assistance for women's needs of higher education. In "Dinner-Parties," Fern attacks narrow-minded men who oppose "the cultivation of women's intellect" because they believe that "men had enough intellect, in their intercourse with each other; and wanted only with woman
that charming, childish prattle and playfulness, which was so refreshing to the male creature, when he needed relief and amusement!" (GS 15). Nevertheless, Fern reasons, "the author of these advanced ideas didn't state whether he considered these childish, prattling women fit to be mothers and heads of families; probably that was too puerile a question to consider in the same breath with the amusement they might afford men by the total absence of intelligence" (GS 15). Some prejudicial men, Fern argues, oppose women's higher education because they believe that education makes women lose "their interest in the increase of the census" and this will yield "disastrous result" when their husbands do not "share their apathy" (The Woman's Question," CS 50). Born to be an unrelenting fighter, Fern marches on articulating her full support for women's education.

Some women, however, Fern admits, are contemptible and deserve to stay inferior to men because they prefer a life of vanity and enjoy being ornaments in men's possessions. Fern categorizes the trifling and flirtatious female as a "rabbit woman" and a "butterfly" one. The former, Fern defines, "knows nothing that is passing in the outside world, nor cares. She never touches a book or a newspaper, not even when she is rocking her baby to sleep" ("Some Varieties of Women," FF 288). The latter, Fern points out, "provided her wings are gay and gauzy, is not particular where she alights." Moreover, she "values her male acquaintances according to their capabilities for trotting her to balls, operas and parties, and giving her rings and bouquets" (FF 289). To such empty-headed women, Fern writes, "As to cultivating your mind, that is all waste powder; you have better ammunition to attack the enemy; and as to cultivating your heart, there is no use in talking about a thing that is unfashionable!" ("Advice to Ladies," FL 1, 319). The
necessity of discussing the need for intellectual improvement to such women, Fern asserts, seems to be totally out of the question because they consider themselves having responsibilities "to display the fashions as they come out; waltz, flirt, dance, sing, and play the mischief generally!" (FL1, 319). Fortunately, Fern maintains, more and more women are awakened and encouraged to live a life of higher standards. Fern maintains that a new type of intellectual woman would outnumber the frivolous kind in the near future.

Not only is education significant for women's intellectual growth which will certainly enable them to be equal, compatible, and diligent companions to their husbands and enlightening mothers to their children, but it is also valuable as a resource of wealth and independence. Fern's belief that assertive and educated women will be able to become independent and supportive of themselves and their families in time of need is apparent in many of her newspaper articles and two famous novels, Ruth Hall and Rose Clark. In "The Widow's Trials," a widow, Janie Gray, is determined not "to yield to despair" because "there was a little innocent, helpless one, for whom she must live on, and toil, and struggle" (FL1, 21). Janie's uncle's refusal to help her in any way does not discourage her from attempting to earn an honest living. Instead, his hard-heartedness strengthens her resolution to stand on her own feet. She flourishingly succeeds as a writer. She "had triumphed over disappointments and discouragements before which stouter hearts than hers had quailed. Comfort and Independence were again hers . . . earned by her own untiring hand" (FL1, 23).

The notion that well-educated women can successfully find some employment to
survive on their own recurs in "Summer Friends; or 'Will is Might.'" Emma Grant, an unfortunate woman whose father has been convicted of forgery, is determined to become a teacher to support herself. Seeking an assistance from an old family friend, Emma is disappointed with his indifference toward her. She wonders, "where was the old frank smile, and extended hand of friendship?" (FL1, 63). Accepting human beings' hypocrisy, Emma, "With difficulty . . . choked down the rebellious feelings that sent the flush to her cheek and the indignant tears to her eyes" (FL1, 63). Resolved to survive unaided, Emma is prepared to employ every faculty she possesses. Her "lithe form was drawn up to its full height; there was a fire in her eye, and a firmness and rapidity in her step, that betokened a new energy. She would not be crushed by such selfish cowardice and pusillanimity; she would succeed . . . It must be that she should triumph yet" (FL1, 64).

Hard work and determination make Emma's school popular and Emma finally "was able to command her own price for her services" after only a year into her career. (FL1, 65)

Not all educated women, however, Fern contends, are able to attain fair employment. Agnes Kearn, an abandoned single mother in "A Page from a Woman's Heart; or, Female Heroism," proudly refuses to accept any assistance from her former admirer. She says, "I must toil on, unaided by you. The night has been long, tedious and starless; the morning must dawn ere long. I will wait and trust. If I forsake not myself, God will not forsake me" (FL1, 307). With the excellent education she has, Agnes's translation, which is "very correct" and "very well done," makes Professor Boggs admit that he "couldn't have done better" himself (FL1, 308). However, instead of giving her a reasonable compensation, Professor Boggs humiliates her with a question: "how come
you to be reduced to this extremity?" (FL1, 308). Agnes's pride and self-respect force her to find "her way into the open air" (FL1, 309). This type of questioning and prying into one's private affairs, Fern maintains, is an effective strategy that mortifies the needy and sends them away without having to provide them with any assistance. Only the strong and the fighting kind of woman, Fern states, will survive and triumph.

Fern greatly admires women with gumption; she encourages such strong-minded individuals to make the most of their assets. Ruth Hall, a struggling widow with two small children, first tries to earn her living as a seamstress. To her disappointment Ruth discovers, "Only fifty-cents for all this ruffling and hemming . . . and I have labored diligently too, every spare moment, for a fortnight; this will never do" (RH 96). Not giving up, Ruth applies to be a teacher when she sees that "The situation was vacant; perhaps she would get it; certainly her education ought to qualify her to satisfy any "School Committee" (RH 96). Unable to attain a teaching position because she does not have any influential patriarchal support, Ruth resolves to write for the papers. She ponders, "She would so gladly support herself, so cheerfully toil day and night, if need be, could she only win an independence" (RH 115). Being a strongly determined woman, Ruth feels, "I can do it, I feel it, I will do it" (RH 116). However, she admits, "there will be a desperate struggle first . . . there will be scant meals, and sleepless nights, and weary days, and a throbbing brow, and an aching heart . . . Pride must sleep! but . . . it shall be done" (RH 116). In moments of despair after failing to secure publishers for her stories, Ruth wonders, "Would a brighter morrow ever come?" (RH 121). Having faith in her ability, Ruth relentlessly continues: "Still her little bark breasted the billows, now rising
high on the topmost wave, now merged in the shadows, but still steering with straining sides, and a heart of oak, for the nearing port of Independence” (RH 133). Ruth’s success as a writer is an existing proof that education is indisputably valuable to women who, in any event, have to support themselves or their families.

Gertrude Dean, a strong female character in *Rose Clark*, experiences poverty as a consequence of her husband’s death the same way Ruth does. At first, Gertrude complies with her father’s and her former in-laws’ suggestions to marry Stahle, a seemingly pious widower, to attain security for her own child. However, their differences in attitudes and educational backgrounds cause them to part in divorce. Once again Gertrude has to find a suitable means for her living. She recalls: "Men stared insolently at me in the street; women cast self-righteous scornful glances; ‘friends’ worse than foes, were emboldened by [Stahle’s] villainy to subject themselves to a withering repulse from her who sought to earn her honest bread." (RC 253) Realizing that marriage is not a sensible way to earn a living, Gertrude relates to Rose Clark: "The nights I walked my chamber-floor, with my finger-nails piercing my clinched palms . . . I weighed every faculty God had given me, measured every power, with a view to its marketable use. I found one yet untried. I seized my pencil, and I triumphed even with the blood-hounds on my track, for God helped the innocent" (RC 255). Gertrude Dean triumphantly becomes an artist who is economically independent after all.

If women were properly educated, Fern contends, they would find many profitable and practical means easily adaptable for survival. Most importantly, however, Fern insists, women must rely on their own abilities, and must not expect that men would be
willing to render any assistance needed. Mrs. Skiddy in Ruth Hall is an exemplar of a strong and resolute woman who manages well on her own. Disgusted with Mr. Skiddy's irresponsibility and his silly dream of sailing to California for gold, she ignores him and lets him depart. Then, she changes her boarding house into rooms for rent, exclusive of meals. She tells Ruth Hall: "when a woman is married, Mrs. Hall, she must make up her mind either to manage, or to be managed; I prefer to manage" (RH 106-107). Moreover, Mrs. Skiddy is an unwavering person who exclaims, "when I set out to have my own way ... Mount Vesuvius shan't stop me" (RH 107). A year later, Mrs. Skiddy proves to be right. When her husband sends her a letter asking for "the passage money to return home," Mrs. Skiddy "Drawing from her pocket a purse well filled with her own honest earnings ... clinked its contents at some phantom shape discernible to her eyes alone; while through her set teeth hissed out, like ten thousand serpents, the word 'N-e-v-e-r!'" (RH 108). Therefore, it becomes obvious that not only do women need formal education to function, but they also need a knowledge of the workings of the business world as well. Fern contends that education and knowledge in business will speedily enable women to gain independence which will in turn make them become more respected in society. In other words, social status of each individual largely depends on his or her financial success. However, society, ruled by men, does not seem to co-operate in promoting women's welfare. In "Some Every-day Topics," Fern asserts, "There are sometimes women who develop a smart business capability worthy of a man; but as a general thing there are few people who speak approbatively of such a woman" (FF 321). Unfortunately, society does not truly admire "smart" women. Fern continues, "No matter
how isolated or destitute her condition, the majority would consider it more "feminine," would she unobtrusively gather up her thimble, and, retiring into some out-of-the-way-place, gradually scoop out her coffin with it, than to develop the smart turn for business which would lift her at once out of her troubles" (FF 321). Ironically, Fern argues, if a man does the same thing, he 'would be applauded as exceedingly praiseworthy'" (FF 321). Satirically, Fern maintains, "they who are loudest in their abhorrence of this 'unfeminine' trait, are they who are the most intolerant of dependent female relatives . . . 'Do something for yourself,' is their advice in general terms; but, above all, you are to do it 'quietly' unobtrusively" (FF 321). Condemning the hypocritical nature of humans, Fern writes, "Of such cold-blooded comfort, in sight of a new-made grave, might well be born "the smart business woman" (FF 321). Having experienced destitution herself, Fern reiterates the philosophy: "No crust so tough as the grudged bread of dependence" (FF 322). She also adds, "It is an understood principle of human nature, that people never value that which is easily obtained. Bread which has been purchased with unearned money has never the flavor and sweetness of that which is won by the sweat of one's own brow" ("Lake George Revisited," CS 268). Women, Fern contends, will gradually employ their best assets to uplift themselves to be on equal terms with men.

The coming woman Fern envisions is active, practical, sensible, assertive, and intelligent. She may be "pretty or plain, it matters not," but she is "lady-like by nature; intelligent, but not pedantic; modest, yet not prudish; strong-hearted, but not 'strong-minded' (as that term is at present perverted); no 'scholar,' and yet well-read; no butterfly, and yet bright and gay" ("Some Varieties of Women," FF 290). Being a sensible person,
she will be "merry without noise, silent without stupidity, religious without fanaticism, capable of an opinion, and yet able to hold her tongue" (FF 290). As a self-sustained woman, marriage is not her priority, but if she is "married, not of necessity sinking into a mere machine; if unmarried, occupying herself with other things than husband-hunting." (FF 290). She is educated, "yet not despising needles and brooms; genial, unaffected, good-natured; with an active brain, and a live heart under lock and key" (FF 290). To this practical kind of woman, Fern writes, "God bless her! wherever she is, for she redeems all the rest" (FF 290).

When women fully realize their valuable and marketable potential, Fern asserts, they will victoriously gain strength and power through their independence. To Fern, "all womanhood seems to be 'marching on'" ("Out on the End of Cape Ann," GS 266). Eventually, Fern contends, "men will have to choose their words in addressing 'women folks,' not . . . for fear of being 'knocked down,' but because woman, be she married or single, being able to earn her own living independent of marriage--that often hardest and most non-paying and most thankless road to it" (GS 266). A new woman, Fern asserts, "will no longer have to face the alternative of serfdom or starvation, but will marry, when she does marry, for love and companionship, and for co-operation in all high and noble aims and purposes, not for bread and meat and clothes" (GS 266). Naturally, Fern maintains, some men do not appreciate self-assertive and independent women. Such men, Fern argues, "are always sure to be men with souls narrow as a railroad track, who never look or desire to look beyond the curve and out into the wide world of progress" (GS 266).
In accord with the progressive world, Fern states, women have become stronger and more courageous to experiment with novel and multiple avenues to better their roles and status. Weak women who conveniently die off if heart-broken or abandoned by men gradually disappear from Fern’s works. The women that Fern portrays are more authoritative and more intellectually powerful. In "Insignificant Love," Fern warrants the stature of a new woman: "Catch a smart, talented, energetic woman . . . The more obstacles she encounters, the harder she struggles, and the more you try to put her down, the more you won’t do it" (FL 2, 137). A similar message recurs in "A Gauntlet for the Men," when Fern asserts that "all the heroism of the present day is to be found among women" (FL 286). A woman who fails in business, Fern contends, "tries again . . . and keeps on trying to the end of the chapter, notwithstanding the pitiful remuneration man bestows upon her labor, notwithstanding his oft-repeated attempts to cheat her out of it when she has earned it!" (FL 286). A woman who is unfortunate enough to marry a "bad, improvident husband," Fern argues, "works all the harder . . . to make up his deficiency to her household; works day and night; smiles when her heart and back are both breaking; speaks hopeful words when her very soul is dying within her," yet she will be "crushed neither by the iron gripe of poverty, nor allured by the Judas-smile of temptation, hopefully puts her trust in Him who feedeth the sparrows" (FL 287). As much as she admires stout-hearted women who will never yield to obstacles and failures, Fern condemns unsuccessful men who, instead of accomplishing the same, "took to drinking." She satirizes such men: "Bless--his--big--Spartan--soul! How I admire him!" (FL 287). After all, Fern asks men, "She 'the weaker sex?' Out on your pusillanimous manhood!"
Prosperous as a career woman through the education she possesses, Fern strenuously encourages women to attain as much knowledge as possible to be able to put it into use in time of need. As an answer to a writer of The New York Tribune who tells an intellectual young woman to "accept some excellent young man's call for her to 'settle' with him as wife, at no salary at all," despite her being offered a large sum for a career, Fern contends that she has witnessed too many women "quite capable . . . of being self-supporting individuals, exhausting the last remnant of their strength in the family." Such women, Fern argues, "too proud to complain or remonstrate, turn away with a crimson cheek, and a moist eye . . . when the husband had effectually blotted out the word self-denial from his own dictionary" ("Women on the Platform," GS 111). Fern, rejoicing in the sweetness of independence, vigorously maintains, "I am nauseated at the idea of any decent, intelligent, self-respecting, capable wife, ever being obliged to ask for that which she so laboriously earns, and which is just as much hers by right" (GS 112). Dependence is a very unpleasant state to Fern, not only because it deprives women of their dignity, but because it also reduces them to men's inferiors. Promoting the value of independence, Fern contends, "I advice [sic] no woman to refuse twelve hundred independent dollars a year for good, honest labor, to become such a serf as this" (GS 112). Education will sooner or later elevate women's roles and status to be equal to those of men.

Unyielding, educated women, Fern argues, will no longer feel insecure in any unexpected circumstances. If unmarried, they can earn their living by "pen and ink, or even stepping upon the platform" ("Sauce for the Gander," CS 295). If unfortunately
married to "drunken, incompetent, unpractical, idle husbands," women can stop being "gentle, silent rivulets" that "stay quietly at home" and become "the noisy cascade" that has to "keep in the public eye" as "business women" because "there is more 'oak' to the women of to-day than there was to those of the past" (CS 297). In case of her husband's death, Fern contends, a new type of woman

will rub the tears out of her eyes, and taking her children by the hand, pocket the well-earned wages of a book-keeper; or she will be an architect; or she will write books, or open a store . . . or through any one of the open doors through which the light of woman's millennium is shining, she will pass serenely to collect her dividends. ("Out on the End of Cape Ann," GS 266)

Education, in other words, warrants women's security, respectability, and independence. Fern asserts, "No more hysterics, sirs! no more fainting! no more trudging miles to match a ribbon! no more eating her heart out, trying to bear rough usage!" (GS 266).

More importantly, Fern articulates, "She wont [sic] have rough usage! She will be in a position to receive good treatment, from motives of policy, from those natures which are incapable of better and higher. She will, in short, stand on her own blessed independent feet, so far as 'getting a living' is concerned" (GS 266-67).

That men do not truly admire "smart" and "intelligent" women and that they dread women's intrusion into their realm of the public sphere, Fern contends, are apparent in their strong opposition to women's means of earning a living as lecturers. Many newspaper articles written by men, Fern points out, reflect unfavorable comments on female lecturers. In other words, Fern maintains, these articles represent men's
"immaturity, their flippancy, their total lack of manliness, and respect for, or appreciation of, true womanhood" ("The Fly in the Ointment," GS 75). To Fern, these writers have done great injustice to "self-respecting, self-supporting, intelligent women" by labelling women's gatherings sneeringly as "strong-minded women's meetings" (GS 75) and by not reporting the essence of their meetings. Instead, prejudicial male writers mockingly detail "the absence of a 'long-train' to [women's] dresses, or the presence of it . . . the straightness of their hair, or the frizzing of it . . . the lack of ornamentation, or the redundancy of it" (GS 76). It is only fair, therefore, that these reporters provide fully descriptive details of a male speaker's appearance the same way they do for the females. The omission of "the color and fit of his pants, coat, necktie and vest . . . and the shape of his boots" should be considered significant if judged by the same standard men use for women ("Women on the Platform," GS 114). Satirically, Fern asks, "How can we possibly judge of his oratorical powers, of the strength or weakness of his logic, or of his fitness in any way to mount the platform, when these important points are left unsolved to our feeble feminine imaginations?" (GS 115).

Men's open-mindedness, Fern argues, will make it possible for them to accept women's capabilities and intellect. To unfair critics of female lecturers, Fern asks, "Among all these women, are there none who are intelligent, intellectual, earnest, and modest withal?" ("The Fly in the Ointment," GS 76). If men are not biased, Fern contends, they will realize that it is "worth while . . . to look at a subject from an intelligent woman's stand-point" ("Some Things in New York," FF 210). Since lecturing is an honest and respectable occupation, Fern asserts, any talented woman who "can draw
an audience" has every right to "fill her pocket" (FF 210). Having one's own career, Fern maintains, is more favorable than "marrying somebody--anybody--for the sake of being supported, and finding out too late, as many women do, that it is the toughest possible way of getting a living" (FF 210). Besides gaining independence, a female lecturer has advantages of "circulating about in the fresh air, among fresh people, making many acquaintances, and . . . some friends; instead of gnawing the bone of monotony all her colorless life" (FF 210). Criticism from the audience that female lecturers sometimes receive, Fern argues, does not wound their feelings as devastatingly as "a brutal word at [their] own fireside, whither [they were] lured by promises of love until death" (FF 210).

Wholeheartedly supporting women's independence and strongly condemning society that is unfair to them, Fern repeatedly urges women to continue their fight and not to allow themselves to be intimidated by any hypocritical authority. She contends, "If conservatism is shocked to hear a woman speak in public, let conservatism stay away; but let it be consistent, and not forget to frown on its own women, who elbow and push their way in a crowded assembly . . . There be many ways a woman can 'unsex' herself, besides lecturing in public" ("Some Things in New York," FF 211). Despite men's anguished outcry of disagreement that women have "unfemininely" selected to earn their living in the limelight, it is fortunate, Fern maintains, that "The pioneer women who have bravely gone forward, and still keep 'marching on,' undaunted in the face of this unmanly and ungenerous dealing, have doubtless, counted the cost, and will not be hindered by it" ("The Fly in the Ointment," GS 77). More women, Fern contends, will be proud to stand on their own feet, to have "a good house over their independent heads, secured and paid
for by their own honest industry" ("Some Things in New York," FF 211). Trusting in women's awakening, Fern argues that the number of career women will multiply. There will be more "female lecturers, female sculptors, female artists of every sort, female authors, female astronomers, female book-keepers, female--anything that is honest" (FF 212). However, one career Fern strongly opposes women from executing is being a "sempstress" because despite continuous hard work, they are only rewarded with "pale faces, hollow eyes and empty pockets, and a City hospital or Almshouse in perspective" (FF 212). Women's enlightenment is yet to arrive.

The reality that women have become more and more economically independent threatens men's egoism and their exclusive realm. Understandably, capable and intellectual women who have perceived themselves as men's equals begin to demand their rights. This outcry for equality has certainly irritated men. In "Women's Millennium," Fern writes, "men start up from their tobacco-torpor nowadays and ask, angrily, what means this present restlessness of American women? This wide and deep-spread discontent, which heaves to and fro, developing itself in a thousand different forms?" (GS 81-82). The reason behind this, Fern argues, lies in the fact that women can have "Compliments, and flattery, and gifts . . . but justice . . . Female eyes have grown dim looking for that, all through the ages" (GS 81). Furthermore, Fern asks men, "Are you quite sure . . . that because only lately this 'wail of discontent' has reached your ear, that it has not been stifled under thousands of tombstones?" (GS 82). It is time, Fern contends, that women attained their rights and respectable status they deserve.

Fern's wholehearted support for women to be accepted as men's equals is evident
in many pieces of her works. However, in her early career, Fern suggests modest strategies for women to attain their goals. As an answer to a French writer who contends that "when a man has toiled step by step, up a flight of stairs, he will be sure to find a woman at the top," Fern writes, "when an American woman gets to the top of that mental staircase, she is obliged to appear entirely unconscious of it, or it would be 'disputed territory' quicker than a report of your musket... all the husbands over here have signed the 'Declaration of Independence'" ("The Weaker Vessel," FL1, 337). Preferring to take moderate actions in her fight, Fern argues, "what can't be had by force, must be won by stratagem [sic]. So we sit on 'that top stair,' and laugh in our sleeves at men—all the time demurely deferring to their opinion. Just so long as they have no suspicion of bit, bridle, or mistress, they can be led by the nose" (FL1, 338). Supportive of a peaceful battle, Fern states, "it is a great mistake to contend with one of the 'lords of creation.' A little finesse, Monsieur... walk around the bump of antagonism, and pat the bump of self-conceit. That's the way we do it" (FL1, 338).

Fern's insistence on women's delicate strategies to win their goals continues to prevail for quite some time in her early years. Capable American women, Fern contends, have persistently extended their domain. She writes, "There are petticoats in the pulpit, petticoats in the editorial chair, petticoats in the lecturer's desk, petticoats behind the counter, petticoats labelled 'M.D.'" ("Wasn't You Caught Napping?," FL1, 382). On the trip to Philadelphia, Fern described with excitement various kinds of employment for women she had witnessed: "I saw the Mint!... I was glad, as I always am, in a fitting establishment, to see women employed in various offices--such as stamping the coin, etc.,
and more glad still to learn that they had respectable wages" ("Glances at Philadelphia. Number Two," FL 241). Furthermore, Fern asserts, "All femality is wide awake, over here . . . They crowd, and jostle, and push, just as if they wore hats" (FL1, 382).

Although Fern appraises women's high self-esteem and their capabilities to pursue career in the public sphere, she time and again insists that it is a "better policy to play possum, and wear the mark of submission. No use in rousing any unnecessary antagonism" (FL1, 382). Believing in feminine stratagems, Fern concludes, "I shall reach the goal just as quick, in my velvet shoes, as if I tramped on rough-shod, as they do, with their Woman's Rights Convention brogans!" (FL1, 383).

That Fern's articles in her early years do not convey so strong a message for women to fight for their rights may be due to her optimistic opinion that women will eventually obtain what they deserve from righteous and reasonable society ruled by men. In "A Little Bunker Hill," Fern maintains, 'my dear woman, 'female rights' is debatable ground . . . granted that we had 'rights,' the more we 'demand,' the more we shan't get them . . . No sort of use to waste lungs and leather trotting to Sigh-racuse about it. The instant the subject is mentioned, the lords of creation are up and dressed" (FL1, 346). A sensible and practical way for women to achieve their goals, Fern contends, is "to pursue the 'Uriah Heep' policy; look 'umble, and be desperate cunning. Bait them with submission, and then throw the noose over the will. Appear not to have any choice, and as true as gospel you'll get it" (FL1, 346). To Fern, women will have control over any situations when they learn to procure an artful means of persuasion. She advises women to pretend to "ask [men's] advice, and they'll be sure to follow yours. Look one way, and
pull another! Make your reins of silk, keep out of sight, and drive where you like!” (FL1, 347). Pretentious submissiveness, Fern argues, enables women to successfully attain their goals.

Not only does Fern suggest in her earlier works that women employ gentle and modest methods in accomplishing their aims, but she also disagrees with woman's rights advocates who go to extremes. In "Hour-Glass Thoughts," Fern scorns wives who "rant of their 'Woman's Rights,' in public;" while, their "husbands eat bad dinners and tend crying babies, at home" (FL2, 124). Having sympathy for a man neglected and controlled by a strong wife who is extremely devoted to the cause of woman's rights, Fern portrays a household run by such women as unhappy and unfulfilling. A strong-minded Mrs. Weasel is a "regular Vesuvius crater" who "won't let" her husband "go out evenings."

Besides, she commands him to take care of their baby while she attends the "Woman's Rights Convention." When his wife returns home, Mr. Weasel meekly asks, 'How's the Convention,' dear?... made one of your smart speeches, hey? Tis n't every man owns such a chain-lightning wife--look out for your rights, dear?" ("Mrs. Weasel's Husband," FL2, 188). Excessive self-assertion, Fern contends, does not bring about peaceful harmony in the household.

Fern's desire for a harmonious society that promotes equality for both sexes is apparent. In "A Transition State," she writes, "The men having the top round of the ladder at present, may sit there till we climb up and oust them, which won't be long; or rather, bless their jackets, till we climb up and oblige them to make room for us to sit down beside them, which, after all, is what we really want" (GS 281). A champion of
equality for all, Fern envisions a society that accepts and judges men and women as individuals on equal terms. Trusting that each individual’s role and significance, regardless of sex, are evenly proportioned, Fern does not blindly suggest a Utopian society free of men. Instead, she writes, "I like [the brethren] near–intellectually and socially" (GS 282). Nevertheless, Fern insists on men’s fairness and willingness to help better women’s status. She urges that men "Not looking down at [women] from a dizzy height, careless how we stumble by the road-side, or cut our weary feet, or bruise our hearts, and stuffing their fingers in their ears, and then making believe they don’t hear our cries" (GS 282). Unprejudiced men, Fern contends, will readily consent to devote their time and energy to "helping [women] along generously after them . . . with a word of cheers and a full hearty belief in [women’s] good intentions and desire to do all [their] duty" (GS 282).

The intensity of Fern’s earnest pledge for women to be accepted as men’s equals has distinctively increased through her years of unsatisfactory experiences. The issues Fern insistently repeats in later years of her career involve many aspects of woman’s rights. An outstanding argument Fern contends for women is the right to have a fresh and uncontaminated atmosphere. Smoking is one of men’s irritating and irresponsible habits to Fern because it affects women’s health mentally and physically. In "Tabitha Tompkins’ Soliloquy," Fern argues that it is unfair for her as well as for other women, whose "grandfather was one of the ‘signers’ of the Declaration of Independence" to enter any public place—a concert hall, a theater, an omnibus, a church, or the streets—to encounter a man acting as "a locomotive chimney" that tries to fill the place with smoke. It is not
right that a woman has to "dodge, and twist, and choke, trying to escape the coils of the stifling anaconda, till [she is] black in the face" (FL2, 82).

It does not seem to be just that healthy, laborious women should be "entitled to" suffocating smoke after "trying all day to make home bright and happy" for their husbands. To Fern, "It is the injustice of men toward women for which it stands the horrible, nauseating symbols" ("A Chapter on Tobacco," FF 124). Vigorously arguing for women to be treated fairly for their health, Fern asks, "isn't it just as much a man's duty to be clean and presentable and inviting to his wife, as it is hers toward him?" (FF 125).

Strongly opposed to smoking, Fern argues that women have a right to "protest against that which withdraws husbands, fathers and brothers from their society as soon as they cross the threshold of home, or else dooms them to inhale a nauseous atmosphere" (FF 125). It is time, Fern contends, that women were more assertive to attain a rightful treatment.

Women's deprivation of public entertainment due to their being unable to secure a male companion to accompany them to such places as concert halls, lecture rooms, theaters, and the like is an unfair treatment society renders to women. Fern reasons, "I have known so many bright, intelligent women obliged to stay at home when they needed these relaxations from care and toil and bother, because custom did not permit their attendance, unless they could lasso a coat and hat to bear them company" ("A Transition State," GS 282). In other words, women, single or married, should have an equal opportunity to enjoy public recreation divorced of an absurd requirement of male escorts. Moreover, a cultured and civilized society should be sufficiently safe for women to walk and travel alone unmolested. Fighting for women's right to attend public places
unaccompanied by men is one of the persistent missions Fern devotes her time to energetically.⁹

Fern's determination to fight for justice and equality for women is prevalent and persistent. Although she does not travel the country or expresses her thoughts in the lecture rooms, Fern relentlessly persuades women, through her newspaper columns, to realize the necessity and the significance of attaining their rights, particularly the rights to vote. Dissatisfied with the quality and efficiency of men's work, Fern contends, "I wish I were a voter . . . were every lady housekeeper a voter, as thank Providence, they are sure to be some day or other, these gentlemen would either have to toe the mark, or be run over by the new wheel of progress" ("Getting to Rights," CS 160). If women have a right to voice their opinion, Fern argues, society will be more pleasant to live in. Men will have "little margin then for all this cheating, this pocketing of salaries without an equivalent" (CS 161). With a more refined and careful nature, women will execute their task vigorously to better and beautify society literally and figuratively. Health and sanitation will be first and foremost in their consideration: "The sidewalks, gutters, streets, would be as clean as a parlor floor . . . The drinking-places would be disgorged of husbands, fathers, lovers, and brothers; also the billiard and gambling saloons" (CS 161). Women's awareness of their own rights, Fern maintains, will make "that desired millennium" for women to vote possible.

A strong advocate for woman's rights, Fern repeatedly reassures her readers of her stand. In "Women and Their Discontents," Fern writes, "I am heart and soul with the women-speakers and lecturers, and workers in public and private, who are trying to bring
[women's right to vote] about" (FF 65). Not only does Fern take a firm stand to promote equality for all, but she also keeps up with encouraging others to accomplish that aim. She contends, "Everything must have a beginning, and no noble enterprise was ever yet undertaken that did not find its objectors and assailants" (FF 65). Chances for women to reach that stage of equality, Fern maintains, depend on a strong support from society as a whole, regardless of sex. "It is not pleasant," Fern asserts, "to see those men in [the] audiences, who should give [women speakers] a hearty, manly support, making flippant, foolish, shallow remarks on the subject, or thanking God that their wives and daughters are not "mixed up in it"" (FF 65). A more irritating situation to Fern, however, is to hear a languid remark from an insensitive woman who claims that she "wouldn't give a fig to vote" and she "is only glad enough to be rid of the whole bothering thing" (FF 66). It is pitiful, Fern contends, "that in this glorious year of our Lord, 1869, [a woman] should still prefer going back to the dark ages . . . she may never see or think of those other women, who may be lifted out of their wretched condition, of low wages and starvation, by this very lever of power" (FF 66). It is necessary that women understand the significance of their fight.

Women's fighting to attain their rights as men's equals is in a way a threat to men's security in their public domain. Despite men's strenuous attempts to reason with women the necessity of their confinement in the domestic sphere, women in all walks of life seem to be awakened to the fact of men's selfishness and their desire to suppress women as their inferiors. As an answer to men's assumption that it is "unfeminine" for women to vote, Fern writes, "I see nothing antagonistic to a sewing-machine in a woman's vote, but
the Editor of the New York... is always throwing a blanket over a woman's head, for fear she will see a ballot-box" ("The Fly in the Ointment," GS 80). Women are free to do anything in their dominion, but they are not supposed to "burn [their] fingers in politics."

Moreover, Fern maintains that to some men, it is "not coarse for [women] to scramble at a matinee for seats, and elbow and jostle, and push men's hats awry... but to subject [themselves] to this kind of thing at the ballot-box, would be to forfeit men's love, and soil both [their] skirts and reputation" (GS 80). In the opposite direction, Fern argues, a woman "may vote and yet be a refined, and lady-like, and intelligent person, and worthy of all respect from those who hold womanhood in the highest estimation. I think she may go to the ballot-box without receiving contamination... I believe that through her the ballot-box is to become regenerated" ("Women and Their Discontents," FF 66).

Throughout the latter part of her career, Fern repeatedly contends that it is time for men to take a serious consideration regarding woman's rights to vote. Men's argument that women may not be reasonable and righteous voters because they tend to be influenced by husbands and male relatives is not justifiable to Fern. The need for equality is apparent and pressing, Fern argues, when we "draw aside the veil from many homes" and witness "long-suffering, uncomplaining wives and mothers, endure a defilement and brutality on legal compulsion" ("Women and Their Discontents," FF 67). Believing in women's intellectual power and their fighting spirit, Fern asserts that nothing will "eventually prevent women from having the franchise. It is only a question of time; that's one comfort" (FF 67). In addition, Fern points out that all men should follow the Quakers in their warm welcome of women's opinions. They allow women to "speak in 'meetin'!"
Women's ability to express themselves is a powerful way of relieving their tension. She maintains, "Nothing hurts a woman like shutting down the escape-valves of talk," but "men never learn that until they find them getting dangerous, and then, when a terrible explosion comes off, they wonder 'what's got into 'em!'' (GS 305). Men's justice and fairness to women, it seems, will make society progressive and peaceful.

Throughout her career as a prolific, satirical columnist and famous, unconventional novelist, Fanny Fern diligently calls for women's equal opportunities of higher education. She strongly promotes the significance of education because she believes, from her own experience, that it warrants the security of women's future and that it will help elevate women's status. Educated women will undoubtedly become efficient and intellectual companions to their husbands as well as knowledgeable and intelligent mothers to their children. Women who are deprived of male protection and providers will not suffer destitution, but will be readily able to survive through the employment of education they possess. Education, in other words, is a stepping stone to women's independence. Above all, Fern firmly certifies that women's abilities to stand triumphantly on their own feet will definitely lead them to be accepted as individuals. Women, then, will deserve a fair chance to express their opinions and will be qualified to demand their rights to be men's equals mentally, socially, and also politically.
Notes

1 Arthur W. Calhoun in *A Social History of the American Family: From Colonial Times to the Present* Vol. II From Independence through the Civil War (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1918) contends that most girls' schools before 1800 were in session for girls only for a few months and taught mainly needlework, music, dancing, and the refinement of morals and manners, 85. Unfortunately, Calhoun continues, girls did not attain the proper means of intellectual growth, 86. A stereotypical woman from a well-off family in America in 1815, Calhoun points out, had to learn how to sing, dance, play on the lute and harpsichord, paint prettily, be a perfect mistress of the French tongue, and make a considerable progress in Italian. Moreover, she was expected to be excellently skilled in all domestic sciences, as preserving, pickling, pastry, making wines of fruits, embroidering, and needlework of every kind, 87. William Wasserstrom in *Heiress of All the Ages: Sex and Sentiment in the Genteel Tradition* (Minneapolis: The U of Minnesota P, 1959) adds that although public education had been readily available to girls in New England since the middle of the eighteenth century and they were allowed to attend the same schools where boys were taught, they went only for short periods and after the boys had been dismissed. The subjects taught were reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion, 5.

2 Mary Kelly in *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1984) also points out that gender played an important role in the education of the sexes. Although women seemed to have more opportunities to attain higher education, the ultimate aim of a female training, however,
had not changed much. A woman's needs, interests, and abilities were presumed different, and she was continued to be prepared for and directed toward a role in the home, 60. Moreover, the overwhelming contrast was in the attitudes toward men's and women's roles. While schools for boys trained and prepared them for colleges like Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth to pursue apprenticeship in various fields of their future careers as in law, commerce, medicine, theology, education, journalism, and the arts, girls' education emphasized the fact that their future would be as a subordinate, supportive, and nurturing figure within the domestic realm and that her life and status would be dependent upon and circumscribed by a male's social standing, 57. Mary P. Ryan in Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present 3rd ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983) adds that in the 1820s institutions such as Emma Willard's Troy Seminary, Mary Leon's Mount Holyoke Seminary, and Catherine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary aimed at an advanced and exclusive education for women. Although the subjects taught ranged from philosophy to astronomy, the seminaries emphasized training their graduates for the home sphere or domestic science, as Catherine Beecher put it: Above all, the seminaries were particularly concerned with their students' acquisition of a moral education, or the training of the heart, 135.

3 Arthur W. Calhoun also contends that women's higher education in a college level was not much encouraged because of the assumption that education would bring about distaste for the pleasures of domestic life and would render women unfit for family and social duties, 89. Mary Kelly points out that women's joys of intellectual awakening were difficult to sustain because they did not perceive their future careers in the public
sphere. Moreover, Kelly argues that the lure of self-fulfillment and the prospects of becoming refined and cultured, worthy as gentlemen's wives and mothers of gentlemen's children, were not sufficient to ward off a sense of malaise and disillusionment, 62.

Rosalind Rosenberg in *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1982) points out that nineteenth-century doctors strongly believed that the womb dominated a woman's mental and physical life, and that it produces a weak, submissive, uncreative, emotional, intuitive, and generally inferior personality, 6. A neurologist George Beard in *Eating and Drinking: A Popular Manual of Food and Diet in Health and Disease* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1871) asserts that women did not use their brain much or used it in trivial matters and scarcely used their muscles. As a result, a woman's brain was about one tenth less in weight than that of man; and the amount of brain work of the more severe kind, was incomparably less than that which man performed. Therefore, Beard contends, women were less able to meet the demand of intellectual exertion, 103. Edward H. Clark in *Sex in Education: or, A Fair Chance for the Girls* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873, rpt. Arno Press Inc., 1972) strongly believes that a woman's reproductive system, if properly nurtured and cared for, would be a source of strength and power to her. If neglected and mismanaged would result in weakness and disease in both its owner's mind and body, 33. Moreover, Clark cites many cases of female college graduates who suffered from injured health of neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, hemorrhage, other derangements of the nervous system, and undeveloped ovaries which would result in sterility, 39, 67-75. In short, Clark's assumption that women by their very nature were unfit both intellectually
and physically to follow the same curriculum as men was a commonplace in nineteenth-century medical discussion.

5 William Wasserstrom specifies that Vassar College had graduated its first class in 1869; Smith and Wellesley in 1875; Bryn Mawr in 1888; Barnard and Radcliffe in 1889. By 1910 fifteen thousand girls were students in the women's colleges and twenty thousand in the coeducational schools, 15, 16, 17.

6 In many places Fern writes about some men's unreasonable fear that higher education may change women and enable them to rebel against their domestic roles. Education to Fern is an asset that will help women survive in time of need, but it will not influence women to disdain housework. In "Women and Their Mistakes," Fern writes, "Because a woman can appreciate a good book, or even write one, or talk or think intelligently, is she not to be a breezy, stirring, wide-awake, efficient, thorough, capable housekeeper? Is she not to be a soulful wife and a loving, judicious mother?" (FF 71). To Fern, men's opposition to women's knowledge acquisition does not seem to be on a solid ground.

7 Fern's contempt of the exclusion of women at men's parties is evident in her joining the women's newspaper writers to form an exclusively women's club called Sorosis to express their dissatisfaction against the New York Press Club's dinner party in honor of Charles Dickens in 1868 that excluded women from the occasion. For more information on the detailed purpose and the organization of Sorosis, see Joyce W. Warren's Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman.

8 The reason for a customary practice of men escorting women to the theater may
be due to the need to protect respectable women's reputation. By the 1830s and 1840s most theaters in big cities in mid-nineteenth-century America were commonly known to reserve the third tier for prostitutes, not for their entertainment but to provide them a convenient place to obtain clients and to execute their business arrangements. For more information on the function of the theaters as a place that promotes sexual business and an attempt to abolish them, see Claudia D. Johnson's "That Guilty Third Tier: Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century American Theaters," in *Victorian America* ed. Daniel Walker Howe, 55-72.

9 James Parton in *Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume* warrants Fern's good intentions to secure privileges for women to attend theaters by themselves. He presents Fern's letter to Mr. Lester Wallack, a theater owner, proclaiming that she is a "believer in woman's rights" and that she would like to ask for "a more liberal policy" so that "intelligent, refined ladies, who have neither father, husband, nor brother to accompany them" to the theater "should not be debarred from its enjoyments." After receiving an assuring letter from the theater owner that unaccompanied ladies can attend the theater and that they are always "under the especial care and protection," the Partons used to keep a lookout for these "valiant ladies," 69-70.
CHAPTER IV

CHILDREN

Out of twenty violets in a garden, you shall not find any
two alike, but this does not displease you . . . You plant
them, and let them all grow and develop according to their
nature, now and then plucking off a dead leaf . . . giving it
shade or sunshine, as the case may be, but you don't try to
erase the delicate tints upon its leaves and substitute others
which you fancy are better . . . I like diversity . . . Each have
their merits; Heaven forbid they should be rolled up . . .
bolt upright, rigid, and fearfully repeated; no collision of
mind to strike out new ideas, no progress, no improvement.
Surely this is not the age for that.

Fanny Fern's "Concerning the Mistakes about Our Children,"
Folly As It Flies, 298.

Despite the rapid industrial and economic growth of the country, the gradual
equality in education, politics, and job opportunities that women successfully yet slowly
attained, and women's more dominant roles in the public sphere, nineteenth-century
American society still strongly expected women to be fully responsible for their dutiful
performances of childrearing and moral guidance. Although paternal care and influence
were considered as of equal importance as those of maternal, the emphasis was
customarily and inevitably more on mothers. The significance of motherhood and
mothers’ roles was evident in many women’s guides and marriage manuals of the period
which portrayed "the almost sacred nature of the mother child relationship" as well as
mothers' "particular qualities of tenderness and affection" (Epstein 76, 77).

Mothers, desiring to execute their mission of educating and disciplining young
and innocent children effectively, turned to such advisors on domesticity as Lydia Maria
Child’s *The Mother’s Book* (1831), William A. Alcott’s *The Young Mother; or,
Management of Children in Regard to Health* (1838), Louisa Hoare's *Hints for the
Improvement of Early Education and Nursery Discipline* (1827), an American Matron’s
*The Maternal Physician: A Treatise on the Nurture and Management of Infants* (1811),
and periodicals such as *Mother’s Assistant*. These books provided young and
inexperienced mothers with detailed instructions on "how to inculcate religion in
children, how to train them to be obedient, how to achieve the firmness and self-control
necessary to develop their characters" (Epstein 82). In other words, mothers were to
cultivate their children morally and intellectually, to discipline them to have refined
manners, and to equip them with sufficient knowledge of the world so that they would be
able to protect themselves against harsh realities of competitive society.

Although a strong advocate of equality for women and an unrelenting supporter of
women’s rights, Fern wholeheartedly insists on the significance of motherhood
throughout her writing career. She repeatedly and energetically contends that a woman,
educated or ignorant, would not and could not completely fulfill her womanly role if she
had no opportunity to perform her motherly duties. Fern argues in "Some Varieties of Women" that "No woman ever has the faintest glimpse into heaven till she has nursed her own baby; in fact, I half doubt if she has earned a right to go there till she has legitimately had one" (FF 92). To women who are unable to conceive their own offspring, Fern suggests that they "adopt the first fat baby [they] could find" (FF 292). To Fern, a baby will enable her to "have some motive to live--something to work for--something, in flesh and blood, which I could call my own--some little live, warm thing to put my cheek against when my heart ached" (FF 292). Moreover, Fern argues, a mother child relationship is powerful and rewarding. It is "a tie that death itself cannot sever" ("A Mother's Soliloquy," FL1, 157). A mother's pride, nevertheless, lies in the fact that she is "the center of [the baby's] little world" and that "its very life depends on [her] faithful care" (FL1, 157). In short, Fern perceives that children are the most precious blessings God bestows upon humans.

The virtues of children are numerous. Fern points out in "Unknown Acquaintances" that children not only make up for "our life disappointments," but they also function as the "golden links" which unite husbands and wives who are "mutually unable to bear each other's faults, or to forbear the causes of irritation" (CS 43). "How often," Fern asks, "has a little hand drawn amicably together two else unwilling ones, and made them see how bright and blessed earth may become in pronouncing that little word--'forgive'" (CS 43).

However, Fern's glorification of motherhood may greatly disturb today's feminists. But the fact that she was a young widow with two small children to support should give
no small weight to Fern's insights into the parent child relationship. She knew first hand the struggles of single parenthood—a fact that should not go unnoted by twentieth-century feminists. Fern's poverty before assuming a writing career forces her to leave her second child with her former in-laws. This incident makes her value a mother child relationship to a great extent. Although in many occasions Fern depicts the virtues of motherhood with utmost sacredness, this practice does not cause her attitudes in various progressive aspects to become less strong or less provocative. Fanny Fern, an articulate writer who embodies a strong fighting spirit for women's equality and other controversial causes, is also a loving and devoted mother not only to her own offspring but also to children in general.

It is significant to note that although Fern is a true humanitarian who believes in providing a caring shelter for homeless children, she earnestly cautions prospective adoptive parents to ponder responsibilities of childrearing with careful consideration. She asserts, "no careless, unpractised hand should sweep so delicate a harp" ("The Transplanted Lily," FL1, 253). What will become of that child, Fern asks, when "you have trained her to habits of luxury, and refined her tastes," but "you weary of your charge, and allow her to fall back upon the guardianship of the rough, the coarse, and unfeeling, who would consider her superiority only a fit mark for the brutal sneer or coarse jest" (FL1, 253). In other words, parenting is a life-long commitment requiring great sacrifice. Fern argues that it is pitiful when "the self constituted parent only wants a child as he would a pet dog, and puts it through no higher course of training" ("The First Baby," GS 311). In short, Fern strongly dissuades those "who are not prepared for its
sacrifices as well as its pleasures—who have not counted in days of sickness, and hours of childish waywardness, and possible hereditary moral weeds to be rooted out" from assuming the "sacred" responsibilities (GS 311). Unreliable persons, who fail to carry out their obligations as expected, not only jeopardize the orphans' fair chances, but they also sabotage the children's lives and unnecessarily increase their suffering "physically and morally" (GS 311). Fern firmly insists that only those who sincerely love and care for children deserve to shoulder a burden of raising, educating, and disciplining unfortunate youngsters to be responsible adults.

The task of bringing up children requires love, patience, sacrifices, and understanding. Not all parents, Fern argues, are readily prepared for such self-denial. In "A Word to Mothers," Fern admits, "T is true, an angel might shrink from the responsibilities of a mother. It needs an angel's powers" (FL1, 234). In other words, a mother does not truly perform her duties when her child "is fed, and warm, and clothed," but its soul is completely entrusted in the direction of "the chance-training of hirelings" (FL1, 235). A mother who never teaches "those little lips to lisp 'Our Father'" unknowingly launches her child "upon life's stormy sea without rudder, or compass, or chart" (FL1, 235). Fern asserts, "God forbid that there should be many such mothers!" (FL1, 235).

It is evident, however, that many children encounter untimely deaths because of such ignorant parents. In "Little Charlie, The Child Angel," Fern condemns mothers who do not have time "to sow the good seed" and "to watch lest the enemy should 'sow tares' to their young children (FL1, 199). Insufficient care and indifference toward children's
well-being usually result in the termination of young lives. Children who survive their parents' carelessness and lack of judgment may eventually lose their battles as grown ups.

In "Seeing the Folly of It," a mother of an unhealthy young woman ignorantly allows her to attend a ball despite the young woman's being dangerously ill. Having arrived at a dance parlor, the woman has to be carried inside by her brother. As Fern describes it, he "stood speechless with horror" after "untying her thick veil" because "Poor Etta was frozen to death!" (FL1, 248 9). The mother's folly obviously yields a devastating outcome.

A similar incident illustrating parental negligence that unnecessarily results in a child's death is vividly portrayed in "Elise De Vaux." Well aware of her teenage daughter's sickly condition, Elise's foolish mother confides to the family physician that Elise "has set her heart upon going to that New Year's ball, and it will never do to disappoint her" (FL1, 75). Ignoring the doctor's warning that going to such an affair might not only sicken but kill Elise, the girl's mother permits her to attend the ball to charm her suitor. The mother's reprehensible conduct inevitably results in Elise's premature death: "in the arms of him, for whom she had thrown away her young life, she was borne to her home--the diamond sparkling mockingly on the clay-cold finger; the pearls still lingering amid her soft ringlets; the round, symmetrical limbs still fair in their beautiful proportions. The heart she coveted was gained--the dear bought victory was won" (FL1, 80). Too frequently irresponsible parents, Fern points out, precipitate their children's untimely deaths.

Fern's accounts of the deaths of children as a consequence of parental carelessness
reflect her perception of their important place in society. Children not only function as
the golden chains that render a joyful household possible, but they also perform their
duties as the "Infant Saviors" or "little angels" whose role is to be their parents' salvation.
To Fern, children's deaths signify God's punishment of selfish and unconcerned parents.
However, through their losses, parents significantly change their attitudes toward life and
become more responsible adults. In "Walter Willet," a well-to-do family takes its
children to stay in a hotel because of the luxurious accommodations. The children,
unproperly cared for, wander off according to their wills. Meanwhile, their mother "sat
there in the drawing room, dressed like a French doll... a careless young mamma [who]
didn't think, (perhaps she didn't know,) how closely little children must be watched, to
make them grow good men and women" (Little Ferns for Fanny's Little Friends, LF 63).
Unguided, a young boy Walter climbs to the roof top to "play fish." He "let down his
line" and "reached over... to see how far it went... Over he went, beating and bruising
his little head--down--down--till he reached the marble floor in the lower entry, where he
was taken up--dead!" (LF 65). Although Walter's mother regrets of her negligence, her
crying "very hard" does not "bring back her poor, neglected little boy." However,
Walter's death is not in vain because it "made her a better mother" to the two remaining
little girls. (LF 65)

Fern's strong disapproval of married couples residing in a hotel reflects her
concern of young children's welfare. As a place suitable for social gatherings, parents
tend to socialize, relax, and do not pay sufficient attention to their youngsters. Sociable
parents in "Murder of the Innocents; or, Home the Place for Married Folks" have
distressfully experienced a severe retribution as a consequence of their being fashionable. The family stays at a hotel where children are not allowed at the dining table. Therefore, "Poor little exiles . . . took their sorrowful meals in the servants' hall, with their respective nurses" (FL2, 221). Assuming the hotel as their residence for so long, the parents harm their child's health: "It was midnight. There was hurrying to and fro in the entry halls and lobbies; a quick, sharp cry for medical help; the sobs and tears of an agonized mother, and the low moan of a dying child" (FL2, 223). The child is prematurely and needlessly dead, "for nature had rebelled at last, at impure air, unwholesome food, and alternate heats and chills" (FL2, 223). The child's death is "a dearly bought lesson" that reforms parents to be more reasonable. This grievous experience causes the mother to "tearfully bend over her remaining bud of promise, finding her quiet happiness in the healthful, sacred and safe retreat of the home fireside" (FL2, 223). Above all, Fern insists that children's well-being is parents' primary concern.

Parental repentance is intensely depicted to illustrate Fern's strong view of the significance of motherhood and her stern opposition to "fashionable" parents. In "The Ball Room and the Nursery," a young child dies of that terrible scourge of children, the croup . . . alone, in the still darkness . . . wrest[ing] with the 'King of Terrors'' while his parents enjoy themselves in a "brilliant scene; that ball-room!" (FL1, 142). The child's death has a powerful impact on his parents' lifestyles. They turn away from a "frivolous" life and dedicate themselves to their children's welfare. "Never again, with flying feet, has [the mother] chased the midnight hours away" (FL1, 144). The mother, Fern concludes, realizes that "Dearer than the admiration of the gay throng--sweeter to her than
viol [sic] or harp—is the music of their young voices, and tenderly she leads their little feet 'into the green pastures and unto the still waters of salvation" (FL1, 145). Fern vigorously contends through many pieces of her works that a child's death is not futile. It, on the other hand, makes an awakening of his or her parents possible and earnest.

A similar transformation has occurred to a young mother in "The Still Small Voice." Rose, a wealthy and beautiful mother has ignorantly wasted her life and carelessly lost her small son because she blindly believes in her empty-headed husband's philosophy that "Religion is well enough for priests . . . well enough for children and old people . . . well enough for ancient virgins" but for Rose "time enough . . . to think of religion, when you see your first gray hair" (FL1, 14). Enjoying her youth and wealthy, fashionable life, Rose completely leaves the care of little Frank in the hands of "a serving-man" and "a nurse." Rose has never thought of death until she faces that of her small boy. The child's death brings about his mother's self-realization and possible transformation: "From that little grave, so tear-bedewed, the flower of repentance springs, at last. No tares shall choke it; no blight or mildew blast it! God's smile shall be its sunshine, and heaven thy reward" (FL1, 15). To Fern, a deceased child becomes a guide to his or her parents' eternity: "the good Shepherd hides the little lamb in his arms, that she who gave it life may hear its voice and follow" (FL1, 15).

Children, of one's own or adopted, are priceless. Their purity and innocence will not fail to do their offices of transforming parents to be less worldly and more pious. Believing in the significance of children as life-fulfillment for anybody capable of love and provision, Fern distinctively portrays, in two short stories, single wealthy women's
metamorphoses from purposeless and pleasure-seeking individuals into altruistic people after their decision to adopt an orphan girl. In "Helen Haven's 'Happy New Year'," Fern depicts a woman who suddenly realizes that "The world seems all emptiness to me. There must be something beyond this, else why this ceaseless reaching of the soul for some unseen good?... Shall I live only for myself?... What am I here for? What is my mission?" (FL2, 207). The consequence of Helen's adopting Mary, a little pauper is advantageous to her own soul. Mary unknowingly becomes Helen's moral guide leading her to the Savior and His saving word. This spiritual experience causes Helen to question her past deeds: "What 'cross' had her shoulders borne? What 'crown of thorns' had pierced her brows? How had her careless feet turned aside from the footsteps of Cavalry's meek sufferer!" (FL2, 209). Reaching the fountain of wisdom, Helen exclaims, "Here at 'the cross,' that world fettered spirit should plume itself for an angel's ceaseless flight... and a small child had 'led' her there!" (FL2, 210). A small child has triumphantly completed her mission of saving her adoptive mother's soul.

Another example of a child having a redemptive effect in a parent's life is exemplified in the story, "The Transplanted Lily." Mrs Gray, a wealthy but childless widow, is tired of life's "hollowness and insincerity" (FL1, 252). She is determined to adopt a child, "a little, fragile, spiritual, delicate blossom" from an asylum (FL1, 255). Satisfied with Lily's appearance, Mrs. Gray takes her home to watch her "grow more beautiful every day, in the sunshine of love, unspoiled by prosperity" (FL1, 255). Transformed by the glory of motherhood, the adoptive mother has undergone a striking change: "The gay world has lost its power to charm [her]; her ear is deaf to the voice of
adulation, for she has taken an angel to her bosom, and in that pure presence, she looks shuddering back upon long, wasted years of frivolity, and blessed God 'that a little child' hath 'led' her" (FL1, 255). Having accomplished a "child-angel" task, Lily passes away: "The bright hectic glows with fearful brilliancy on that marble cheek. The eyes are bright with a fire that is fast consuming her" (FL1, 253). Although mother and child part in death, the message Fern conveys here that there is definitely a prospect of their reunion in the heavenly kingdom seems to be a consolation to all mothers who have experienced the same loss.

The death of any child, biological or adopted, grieves concerned parents. Fanny Fern, a loving and understanding mother who had lost her first child, turns to writing optimistically about children's life after death as her effective healing remedy. Fern's experience of such loss enables her to identify herself as one and the same with many mothers, her readers, who have undergone similar agony. Her vivid and moving portrayal of a child's death, especially that of her first daughter which appears many times in newspaper articles and in *Ruth Hall*, a biographical novel, does not necessarily signify that Fern is one of the sentimentalists whose writing is highly emotional and evolves around death and deathbed scenes as some critics contend. Fern's writing, though it may seem morbid to modern readers, in fact, reflects her response to a high death rate of children at the time. In "Incident at Mount Auburn," Fern contends that death is "an every-day occurrence" and that "Many mothers had laid [their] darling[s] in the earth" (FL1, 260). To Fern, the death of the "first-born" is almost unbearable. It is a common scene in any cemetery, Fern argues, that one can witness a mother who claims that "there
is no spot so dear... as the little mound that covers her child" (FL1, 260). The fact of a child's death does not prevent a mother from weep[ing] and shudder[ing] when the cold wind sweeps past at night, and [from] fain warm[ing] its chilled limbs in the familiar resting-place" (FL1, 260). Fern unmistakably argues that maternal love is eternal and unfathomable.

Relating her first child's death revivifies Fern's memories of the sacredness of motherhood and at the same time manifests her strong faith in God. Wild flowers' fragrance, Fern recounts in "My Little Sunbeam," reminds her of "a fragrant, shadowy wood... a rippling brook... a bird's song... whispered leaf music... a mossy seat... dark, soul-lit eyes... a voice sweet, and low, and thrilling... a vow that was never broken till death chilled the lips that made it" (FL1, 25). Precious yet painful remembrance of her departed child certainly causes sorrowfulness. However, her grief is overcome with her belief that "God shield my little sunbeam! May she find more roses than thorns in her earthly pathway" (FL1, 25). To Fern, God is kind, compassionate, and forgiving.

Fern's self consolation in the form of optimistic writing about children's joyous and cheerful life after death continually appear as a remedy to lessen the intensity of her grief. Fern's accounts of her first child's death which recur in "Lilies of the Valley" reveals Fern's strong bond with all her children. "I will tell you," Fern relates, "how gently that little hand pushed aside the cup of life--of that long, last, earnest look which was bent on me, when the tongue was powerless to speak its love--of the gradual flickering and fading out of life's little taper" (FL1, 220). The child's purely angel like
qualities unsuitable for the tainted world, however, foreshadow her own fatal destiny:
"Large, brown, spiritual eyes . . . a cloud of shining hair shades a brow too holy for earth"
(FL1, 219). The child's purity is impeccable: "As childhood's years pass on, no taint of
earth comes over that pure heart" (FL1, 219). The child's innocent and sacred appearance
also causes "Gray-haired wisdom [to] smile sadly, and [to] say the dew-drop will exhale"
(FL1, 220). The notion of eternal happiness for children in the care of the merciful God
makes grief more bearable for parents.

In stark contrast to the Calvinistic belief in infant damnation, Fern poignantly
argues that children are sinless, innocent, and untainted by the evils of the world.¹ Time
and again, Fern's stories picturesquely portray the deaths of young children and the
intense grieving of their parents. It is noteworthy, however, that Fern perceives the
youth's deaths as an indication that the world is too corrupted for such innocents. The
Almighty, out of His mercy, summon young children back to the heavenly realm to be
free from humanly sufferings and to await resurrection.² In "The Mother's Touch," Fern
consoles a grief-stricken mother who has lost her child: "what a void is left when it is the
little one who goes! . . . you will see myriads of little graves beside your own darling's,
and myriads of mothers who have passed through the same Gethsemane, where you are
now weeping tears of blood" (GS 176). A strong faith in God will eventually relieve
parents' sadness and enable them to thank God that their child is "safe from the fearful
earthly storms" and that the "Maker" knows when "he folded my baby safely to His
protecting breast, what was in the future" (GS 176). Fern encourages her readers to trust
Providence by asserting that "some day you too will cease to weep—growing unselfish--
and reaching forth further each day your supplicating hands towards that heavenly home where there shall be 'no more death'' (GS 176). To Fern, death is not threatening; it is a rebirth that reunites one with the Supreme.

That Fern perceives children's reunion with God as sensible and justifiable is evident. She contends in "On a Little Child, Who Had Crept before a Looking-Glass that Was Left upon the Sidewalk," that a child whose parents are religiously ignorant deserves to be summoned back to heaven. This is a righteous way to protect innocent children from an evil-contaminated world. To such children, Fern writes, "heard you never of Him who biddeth 'little children come?' In your dark and noisome home, heard you never the name of 'Jesus,' save from blasphemous lips? Closed those blue eyes never with a murmured 'Our Father'?... Crept you out into the warm sunlight, under the bright blue sky, with a bird's longing to soar?" (FL1, 126-27). The world of moral depravity is definitely not a suitable dwelling place for pure and uncorrupted children. Fern time and again comforts children that there is a place with "a 'song,' and a 'harp,' and a 'white robe' for you! Just such as you were 'blessed' with holy hands; sacred lips have said, 'of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' God keep you undefiled, little earth pilgrim!" (FL1, 127). To Fern, heaven is more promising for true love and happiness.

Children's reunion with the Almighty not only saves them from the morally-decayed world, but it also paves the way for parents' salvation and eternal contentment. Fern warrants in "Two in Heaven" that departed children are "Safely housed from storm and tempest. No sickness there, nor drooping head, nor fading eye, nor weary feet. By the green pastures, tended by the good Shepherd, linger the little lambs of the heavenly
That death is a gateway to freedom and eternal bliss is well illustrated in "A Night-Watch with a Dead Infant." Fern writes that in death "God speed thy flight! No unerring sportsman shall have power to ruffle thy spread pinions, or maim thy soaring wing" (FL1, 40). Death, moreover, signifies that life is transitory and that one should strive for eternity. To mothers, a child's death causes them to be aware that "Earth less attractive. Eternity nearer. Invisible cords, drawing the maternal soul upwards. 'Still small' voices, ever whispering, Come! to the world weary spirit" (FL1, 40). Fern posits that parental love induces bereaved mothers to yearn for a prospect of reuniting with their deceased children. Such anticipation and a belief in God and heaven, Fern asserts, will certainly result in mothers' spiritual elevation. However, to reach their aim successfully, Fern cautions them to "Walk softly" because "holy eyes watch thy footsteps! . . . cherub forms bend to listen! Keep thy spirit free from earth taint; so shall thou 'go to them,' though 'they may not return to thee!'" (FL1, 40). Death which signifies the transitoriness of the world is after all transitory in its nature because the dead "all await with folded hands, closed eyes, and silent lips . . . the resurrection morn" (FL1, 99). With death, the cycle of life continues.

Stories about children never disappear from Fern's writing. However, in the later years of her journalistic career, Fern's concentration on children is not primarily directed to their deaths and their eternal happiness in the heavenly realm any longer. Rather, Fern focuses more on various aspects of children's lives, particularly on those concerning their rights, health, education, religious knowledge, and manners. Having witnessed children's being taken advantage of by careless and selfish grown-ups, Fern proposes that adults
acknowledge the fact that children are human beings who deserve to be treated fairly and kindly. Often times, Fern's newspaper articles feature small children's sufferings, their complaints, and their urge for more of adults' understanding. In short, Fern earnestly identifies herself with children, vigorously argues for their individuality, and strongly encourages their being accepted on equal status as that of adults.

Fern's many newspaper articles certify that her motherly love is not exclusively reserved only for the children in her care. On the contrary, it is boundless and extends to all children, particularly to the orphans and the motherless. She expresses her understanding of the young in "For Little Children" that "you should nestle 'round me, telling all your little griefs; for well I know that childhood has its griefs, which are all the keener because great, wise grown-up people have often neither time nor patience, amid the bustling whirl of life, to stop and listen to them" (FL2, 400). Unable to actually be a mother to all children, Fern conveys through her columns the necessity of society's love for children. It is important, Fern argues in "All About Doctors," that parents learn to "Seal their [children's] closing eyelids with a kiss and a blessing" instead of with "a reproof for any of that day's sins of omissions or commission" (CS 107). It is only fair for them to "have this sweet memory of a happy childhood, of which no future sorrow or trouble can rob them. Give them their rosy youth" (CS 107). Having experienced a happy childhood with a loving and kind mother herself, Fern persuades parents to replace "Dignity" and "Severity" in their household with "Love and Pity" to make their young children's lives more pleasant and worth remembering. She insists, "Too much indulgence has ruined thousands of children, too much Love not one" (CS 107).
Parental love is significant for children’s growth physically and morally. Although prejudice is common in human nature, Fern asserts that parents with many children should be just and fair to all of their offspring. Injustice of parents can easily ruin a child’s well being. Fern illustrates a quiet and sensitive child in "Our Hatty" who "saw duplicity better rewarded than sincerity, began to have little infidel doubts whether the Bible . . . was really true" (FL1, 33). As time passes on, the child becomes more reclusive and removes herself from the family circle: "All her sweet, childish impulses were checked and crushed; and where the sweet flowers of love and confidence should have sprung up, the weeds of distrust and suspicion took bitter root" (FL1, 33). Not until her artistic talent is discovered by an encouraging spinster who enhances her popularity do her parents realize that all the time what the child craves is love. As a response to her father’s pride in her fame, she pronounces, "what is fame to a woman? Like the 'apples of the Dead Sea,' fair to the sight, ashes to the touch! From the depths of her unsatisfied heart, cometh ever a voice that will not be hushed—Take it all back, only give me love! (FL1, 39). Love, to Fern, is like an eternal well that will fill life with vigor and enthusiasm.

Children whose parents are aware of the significance of love are more fortunate than those who have neither parent(s) or sufficient care. Fern, believing in maternal responsibilities and mothers’ abilities to sacrifice for their children, points out the disadvantages motherless children normally endure in "Thoughts Born of a Caress." She argues that a father may be "kind, affectionate, considerate," but "a man’s affections form but a small fraction of his existence" (FL1, 173). Paternal love usually lacks its
delicateness especially when fathers are businessmen. "His thoughts are far away," Fern declares, "even while his child clammers on his knee. The distant ship with its rich freight, the state of the money-market, the fluctuations of trade, the office, the shop, the bench" (FL1, 173). A father may be able to provide for all his child's physical needs, yet he cannot afford his time for other minute details a child is curious of and which could have easily been well entertained by motherly attention. When a child does not "understand the reason for anything . . . nobody stops to tell her. Nurse 'don't [sic] know,' the cook is 'busy' (FL1, 174). As a grown woman, without maternal instinct and cautious judgment to guide her decision, she marries an unworthy man: "A fleeting honey-moon, then the dawning of a long day of misery; wearisome days of sickness" (FL1, 174). An unfortunate motherless woman wretchedly ends her life.

Fern argues that fair treatment is essential to children's sound psychological development in "The Partial Mother." Fern contends that it is pitiful for a small child to answer her mother's question, "Is that you, my darling?" with a meek answer "No mamma, 't is only me!" (FL1, 139). Fairness and equality in a large family are essential. In other words, parents should not allow "The superficial, the brilliant, the showy, the witty, [to] throw a dazzling glare over [their] eyes" (FL1, 139). An advocate of equality for all, Fern asks prejudicial parents "What right have you to have a favorite child? The All-Father maketh his sun to shine alike upon the daisy and the rose" ("The 'Favorite' Child," FL 282). Conscientious parents should "gather up those clinging tendrils of affection with gentlest touch; trample them not with the foot of haste or insensibility rudely in the dust" (FL 283). Moreover, with a child timid, "slow of speech and
stammering of tongue," parents need to be more patient. (FL1, 139) "Chide him not!"
Fern asserts, "Let him hide his tearful eye and blushing cheek in the folds of your dress, if he will; put a loving arm about him, and let him creep to your heart, and nestle there, till the little dove gains courage to flutter and soar with a strong wing" (FL1, 140). A child whose parents are fair and reasonable is more likely to be a contented and successful grown-up. His parents will sooner or later witness that a child "shall yet, eagle-like, face the sun! You shall yet scarce keep in sight his soaring pinions!" (FL1, 140). Freedom to be one's self is important for a child's mental and intellectual development as well as for an acquisition of self-confidence.

Children's individuality is what Fern promotes unrelentingly. She attests in "Mistakes about Our Children" that "No farmer plants his celery and potatoes in the same spot, and expects it to bear good fruit. Some vegetables he shields from the rude touch, the rough wind, the blazing sun" because he "knows that each requires different and appropriate nurture, according to its capacities" (FF 305). Raising children needs more carefulness; Fern asks, "Should they who have the care of the immortal be less wise?" (FF 305). In other words, Fern earnestly attempts to convince parents to realize the significance of their children's individual personality. She vigorously argues in "Concerning the Mistakes about Our Children" that "A child who thinks for itself, prefers waiting upon itself, and is naturally self-sustained, is of course much more trouble than a heavy-headed child, who 'stay put' wherever and however you choose to 'dump' him down" (FF 297). Parents need to instill self confidence and a pride in individual difference in all their children.
Uniqueness in personality is not difficult to attain in a family that values democracy and freedom. Fern contends in "Every Family Should Have It" that "Fortunate are those parents who have learned to respect the individuality of their children. Who are not madly bent upon planting them in the family garden in set rows, and so closely that their branches have no room to stretch out into the fair sunlight" (CS 172). The exact sameness of things means monotony which destroys anticipation, excitement, and novelty in life. It is therefore unfortunate for children to have mothers who "seem unwilling to recognize [their] individuality . . . as if all children should be made after one model; as if one of the greatest charms of life were not individuality" ("Concerning the Mistakes about Our Children," FF 296). A devoted supporter for children's fair treatment, Fern persuades parents to learn the art of childrearing from nature. She writes, "How we should long for the delicate pink of the rose, and the royal purple of the violet, and the pure snow of the lily, and the distinctive aroma of each! Why not in this respect take a lesson from Nature, which is at once so bountiful and so wise?" ("Every Family Should Have It," CS 172). Nurturing individuality is the best policy.

Equally important to democracy in childrearing is freedom for children to be themselves. Although Fern agrees that every child "should be taught civility," she contends in "Concerning the Mistakes about Our Children" that children are "tortured" in the "zealous parental endeavor to teach them politeness" (FF 295). Fern's unpleasant childhood experience of being forced to kiss "a snuffy old person" resulted in her "uncompromising hatred of tobacco in every form . . . after the repulsive ceremony" (FF 295). A kiss, to Fern, is "a holy thing, or should be, and not to be lightly bestowed. At
any rate, it never should be compulsorily given" ("Children Have Their Rights," FF 233). Compulsion of any kind will only make "hypocrites" of the children. Parents who compel their children to undergo such trauma, Fern asserts, deserve "the severest reprehension" (FF 295). Not only is it unjustifiable for parents to force children to perform such actions against their will, but it is also not righteous to create a rebellious spirit in innocent youngsters. Believing in children's freedom, Fern insists that they express their opinions without fear of being reprimanded by conservative adults. She argues, "children have their likes and dislikes, and often much more rationally grounded than those of grown people, though they may not be able to syllable them" (FF 233).

An active advocate of human rights, Fern persistently calls for children's equality. In "Children's Rights," one of many articles dedicated to a better treatment of children, Fern writes, "Men's rights! Women's rights! I throw down the gauntlet for children's rights!" (FL1, 188). Strongly disapproving of injustice done to children, Fern elaborately depicts many incidents to illustrate her discontent with adults' selfishness and unreasonableness. She contends that in various occasions she witnesses small children "seated by a pleasant window, in a railroad car... forcibly ejected by some overgrown Napoleon, who fancied [their] place[s], and thought, in his wisdom, that children had no taste for anything but sugar candy" (FL1, 188). It is not right that children are robbed of the sight of "pretty trees and flowers, and bright blue sky," which give their "little souls a thrill of delight" (FL1, 188). It is also unjust that a car conductor "without a word of comment, coolly took a well-behaved boy of ten years, [who] paid his fare, by the shoulder and placed him on his feet, and then motioned a lady to his vacant seat"
("Children Have Their Rights," FF 232-33). Displeased with children's being taken advantage of, Fern continues, "what right has a gentleman to take a blushing little girl of twelve or thirteen and seat her on his knee, when he happens to want her seat" (FF 233). Children deserve the same respectful treatment as adults.

Fern's fight for children's rights is vigorous and extensive. She expresses in "Children Have Their Rights" that "There is not a day of my life in which I am not vexed at the injustice done to children" (FF 232). Some are forced to consume certain foods for which they have an "unconquerable and unexplainable disgust" (FF 234). Some are undertaken "to quiz, and tease, for [an adult's] own amusement" ("A Lance Couched for the Children," FL2, 370). Some are punished too severely for "tearing a hole in [their] best pinafore, or breaking a China cup" ("Children's Rights," FL1, 189-90). Some are reprimanded for "the very sin [their] tormentors helped [them] to commit" (FL1, 189). These remarks are not meant to suggest that Fern blindly advocates complete independence for children; rather these comments illustrate her awareness that parental guidance is a necessity to make up for children's inexperience. Moreover, she sincerely admits that children "are not all angels ... some of them are malicious, and ugly, and selfish and disagreeable," but she asserts, "whose fault is it? ... not one time in ten, the child's" ("Children Have Their Rights," FF 236). Children's misbehavior, Fern believes, results from improper role models and inappropriate conduct of their own parents. Given these reasons, Fern asks mature adults to "sit down and recall your own childhood ... and don't go through the world striding with your grown up boots on little children" (FF 235). Every individual regardless of age in a democratic country is entitled to live a healthy and
contented life.

To unconcerned parents, a child's welfare means little more than providing fine clothes, good food, fashionable schools, and many servants. In "Children Have Their Rights," Fern argues that "We are all making grave mistakes about children . . . Fathers, and mothers, delegating so much of the care and oversight of them to those, whose paid service yields neither sympathy or appreciation to the victims under their charge" (FF 237). Fern, having witnessed many incidents of children's victimization, strongly urges parents not to trust completely children's well being to their employees. Strolling in a New York public parks, Fern time and again confronts scenes of child abuse. A little boy innocently playing with fallen twigs was struck on his face by his nurse, who afterwards "left him standing there, sobbing, with nothing to do, while she continued her chapter of gossip" ("The Nurse of the Period," GS 149). A little girl walking away from her "Gorgon nurse" was slapped on her head and violently retrieved to a bench where the nurse had been seated "talking with a coarse-looking man." Fern testifies that the sobbing child was set "so hard upon [the nurse's] knee that I could distinctly hear it catch its breath" (GS 150). Caring mothers, to do the least, should occasionally "follow their nurses . . . to see if all is right with their children when out of doors" (GS 150).

Fern's concern with children's well-being and their health is evident in much of her writing. Her condemnation of careless mothers who entrust their young ones to the care of servants and nurses frequently appears. Fern relates in "Unknown acquaintances" that she "used to have many unknown acquaintances among the little children in the parks; but what with French nurses and silk velvet coats, I have learned to turn my feet
elsewhere" (CS 42). Often times, Fern admits, abusive scenes of children's being
"slapped for picking up a bright autumn leaf, though it may chance to be 'dirty;' or denied
a smooth, round pebble, on account of a dainty little glove that must be kept immaculate"
anger her. (CS 42) Sympathizing with victimized children, Fern writes, "not a day passes
that my blood does not boil at the cruelty [a helpless child] endures" ("The Nurse of the
Period," GS 151). Moreover, Fern asserts that merciless and inhuman treatment that
unprotected children receive may damage their health permanently: the "temper . . .
spoiled and soured by such roughness and injustice . . . the aching little head, which is
slapped and shaken" (GS 151). The vulnerability of little children evokes Fern's desire to
"call on all their mothers and fight Quixotic battles for the poor little things" ("Unknown
Acquaintances," CS 42). However, Fern admits that an attempt to awaken such ignorant
mothers to the realization of the danger to which they subject their children by placing
them in such different hands may be in vain because "mothers who dress their children
[fashionably] to play" do not care for "anything but their looks" (CS 42).

A zealous supporter of children's vitality, Fern campaigns through her writing the
necessity of nutritious foods, exercises, and appropriate clothing for the young. In "The
Woman Question," Fern tells all mothers to "Have one rough suit for your little ones, this
summer, to tumble about the dirt in. The amount of happiness they will get out of that
rough suit, and their liberty in it, is not to be computed by any parent's arithmetic" (CS
54). Children's fine clothes may reflect mothers' pride and signify the parents' prosperity,
but they confine the wearers of freedom to move about or to play. Fern energetically
suggests that mothers "Leave off for a time the sashes and laces, and let the little ones get
happily, and what is better, healthily dirty" (CS 54). A provocative suggestion that reflects Fern's advanced ideas for girls' health occurs in "The Tom-Boy." Although it is unconventional for girls to play as boys do, Fern vigorously advises girls to "Soil your hands and face, tangle your hair, do anything that's innocent, but don't grow up with crooked backs, flat chests, sallow faces, dull eyes and diseased brains" (PDB 122). The stigma of appearing unconventional is more desirable than possessing an unhealthy body or possibly living a shortened life.

Fern's promotion of good health for children is undeniably prominent. In response to Henry Ward Beecher's approval of candies for children, Fern writes two sprightly articles. She exclaims in "A Sermon to Plymouth Pulpit" that Beecher's recommendation of "candy" or "sugar plums" for children is insensible. She contends, "to be candid, I am ashamed of you" (GS 61). Although she admits that "a bit of pure candy, given to a child as dessert after a wholesome meal, is perfectly harmless," but straightforwardly she writes, "not even the gifted pastor of Plymouth church, whose sermons, to me, are like a spring of water in the desert, can ever make me believe that an indiscriminate nibble of even pure candy between meals is good for any child" ("Letter to Henry Ward Beecher," CS 109). Being a grandmother of a motherless grandchild, Fern realizes how difficult it is to deny a child's wish, but she proudly warrants that her granddaughter is "five years old, but never touches candy." Instead, she drinks milk and eats bread, with a relish that candy-fed children never know" ("A Sermon to Plymouth Pulpit," GS 62). Naturally, Fern contends that her granddaughter divorced of candies enjoys perfect health.

That Henry Ward Beecher, a grandfather himself, perceives no harm in candy
consumption, Fern argues, is due to the fact that he does not have to shoulder any burden resulting from a child's sickness. "If his grandchild has the stomach-ache," Fern writes, "it is the women of the family who will soothe it, and bear its cries and its wakeful nights. If the little teeth prematurely decay and ache, it is the women who will accompany it to the dentist's for the heart rending wrench of cold iron" ("A Sermon to Plymouth Pulpit," GS 62). In short, Fern asks, "what do they annually contribute to enable the fat family doctor to ride in his carriage and live in Fifth Avenue? That's what I want to know" (GS 63). Convinced that eating candy generally sickens children, Fern tells Beecher, "I now propose to pit my grandchild against yours on the candy question, and see which, in the future, brings us the heaviest dentist and doctor's bills" ("Letter to Henry Ward Beecher," CS 109). Sweets are not only destructive to health, but they also adversely affect the family's economic well-being.

Fern's efforts to promote good health for children are in accord with her belief that healthy bodies are essential for acquiring knowledge. Fern, trusting that children's ability to learn and to gain knowledge commences at a very early age, urges parents to make a nursery pleasant and delightful. She contends, "the little children, reaching out their young thoughts, like vine tendrils, for something to twine about, something to lean on, something to grow to—in fine, something to think and talk about. A blank, white wall is not suggestive or inspiring" ("Mistakes about Our Children," FF 306). Education, Fern argues, occurs everywhere; education is boundless and should not be erroneously supposed only to be had at schools" ("Tact," CS 241). If a child "does question your opinions occasionally," Fern posits, "don't be in a hurry to call it 'impertinence;' don't be
too lazy or too dignified to argue the matter with him; thank God rather, that his faculties are wide awake and active" ("Concerning the Mistakes about Our Children," FF 297).

Argumentation and inquisitiveness do not mean defiance. On the other hand, they help enhance possibilities for children's intellectual growth. Fern insists that a child who "always asks an explanation of terms or phrases it cannot understand, who is never willing to repeat, parrot like, that which is incomprehensible, will far outstrip in 'education' the ordinary routine scholar" ("Tact," CS 241). It is important, Fern asserts, that parents not "refuse to answer [children's] proper questions." In other words, "Do not check this natural intelligence, for which books can never compensate, though you bestowed whole libraries" (CS 241). Education at home is as equally important as that acquired in schools.

Although the formal education children receive at schools somewhat enhances their learning abilities and familiarizes them with a wide range of information, Fern argues repeatedly against long-hour schooling. At a certain age, Fern agrees that children need to learn, but they should not be forced to "learn everything." Fern asserts in "Women and Their Mistakes" that "to keep a growing child in school from nine till three is simply torture" and that she confronts "each day, at three o'clock, the great army of children, bearing in their bend shoulders, narrow chests and pale faces, the unmistakable marks of this overstrain of the brain, at a critical age" (FF 83). Parents are the only authority who can rectify the matter for children's better condition. Fern writes, "If parents think physical education a matter of no consequence, why should teachers love those children better than the parents themselves?" (FF 84). At any rate, Fern invites
parents to be considerate in deciding the proper period of time children should be in school. In other words, parents should take into consideration their children's health "without any reference to the side question, how they can 'bear those noisy children, during the subtracted hours, at home.' Perhaps they can bear this than to pay the doctor's bills" ("A Peep at Boston," CS 28). After all, Fern asks inconsiderate parents, "what right have you to require of your child . . . what it would be impossible for you to do yourself? You know very well that you could not keep your mind on the stretch for so many hours to any profit; or your body in one position for such a lengthy of time, without excessive pain and untold weariness" ("A Word to Parents and Teachers," FL 110). Being confined in school for so long is hazardous to both children's mental development and their physical health as well.

Major areas of children's education that Fern proposes for improvement include shortened school hours, knowledgeable yet caring female teachers for girls' schools, properly ventilated school rooms, a reasonable amount of school work, and sufficient physical exercises. Fern's notion of proper period of time children should be confined in school appears in "A Trip to the Northern Lakes." On a trip to Pittsburgh, Fern spots a school that announces its hours for the young "from nine till twelve in the morning, and from two till four in the afternoon." Pleased with its practicality, Fern writes, "there is one place where health is considered of some importance in education" (FF 345).

Not only should school hours be practical and suitable for the age of children, but school teachers must also be knowledgeable and caring. In "Fern Musings," she asserts that if she were on an "August school committee," she would make certain that "no
school-marm should be inaugurated who had not been a married mother" (FL2, 259).

Fern's ambivalent feeling toward spinsters' roles as teachers is evident when she writes, "I don't believe in old maids; they all know very well that they haven't fulfilled their female destiny, and I wouldn't have them wreaking their bilious vengeance on my urchins" (FL2, 259). Yet, in many occasions, Fern personally warrants old maids' capabilities of love and caring toward young children. What Fern truly opposes as unsuitable for girls is male teachers. She argues in "Men Teachers in Girls' Schools" that "It takes a woman, who understands all the witcheries of the sex" to educate and discipline female students. (CS 121) That a young man cannot execute his teaching and disciplining tasks successfully is apparent. Fern contends, "How can he box those little round ears? How can he disfigure those soft, white palms? How can he--sending all the other pupils home--trust himself, after school, alone with those bright eyes, to put them through a subduing tear process? Ten to one the 'subduing' is on the other side!" (CS 120-21). Only a gray-haired, experienced old man can be suitable for the task.

Fern's unrelenting fight for a better condition of children in school is evident in many of her newspaper columns. She argues in "Children's Rights" that she witnesses small children "sitting, like little automatons, in a badly-ventilated school-room, with your nervous little toes at just such an angle, for hours; under the tuition of [a teacher], who didn't care . . . whether your spine was as crooked as the letter S or not" (FL1, 189). It is pitiful, Fern argues, "this dwarfing of American children with improper food, want of exercise, and cork-screw clothes. It is inhuman to require of their enfeebled minds and bodies, in ill-ventilated school-rooms, tasks which the most vigorous child should never
have imposed upon his tender years" ("A Word to Parents and Teachers," FL 109). Such pressure on children, Fern contends, is equal to "murder [of] the innocents" (FL 109).

Children's ill health as a result of excessive education is well illustrated in "The Tom-Boy." Young Maria is expected to study almost all the time. She "studied and grew crooked" and her mother sent her to "Professor Cram-all's school 'to be finished'" (The Play Day Book) PDB 122). After two years of intensive education, Maria "got finished" and "when she came from there, she went straight to a 'water-cure establishment,' and there she is now, trying to get her poor crooked back straightened" (PDB 123). Education is obviously a waste because its possessor is unable to put it into use due to his or her ill health. The increase of illness among school children disturbs Fern's conscience. She vigorously calls for parents' reaction. In "Chit-Chat with Some Correspondents," Fern writes, "who is to take this matter in hand? Who is to say there shall be absolutely no lessons out of school, unless the present duration of school hours shall be shortened?... Why wait till brain fever has set in? Why wait till little spines are irretrievably crooked?" (CS 91). After all, Fern argues, "of what mortal use is it to keep on pouring anything into a vessel when it is incapable of holding any more, and is only wasted upon the ground?" (CS 91).

To help better the school learning environment, Fern contends, a caring mother, at least occasionally, should "visit the school-room... and examine the state of ventilation in the apartment, and see if the desk, at which the child sits so long, is so contrived that it might have been handed down from the days of the Inquisition, as a model instrument of torture" ("Women and Their Mistakes," FF 85). The conditions of a school room are not
the only consideration parents should take seriously. Equal attention should be given to
the amount of school work as well. Overhearing a mother boasting to a friend of the
"smartness and precocity" of her seven year old daughter who "attended school from nine
till three each day, and studied most of the intervening time; and was so fond of her books
that all night, in her sleep, she was saying over her geography lessons and doing her sum
in arithmetic." Fern writes, "Comment on such folly is unnecessary" (FF 85). Obsession
of any kind is ruinous to health.

Both parents' and teachers' awareness of children's abilities to accomplish their
school work is important. Having received letters from children asking for her help in
composition writing, Fern fervently argues, "A child should never be allowed, much less
compelled to write words without ideas" ("A Word to Parents and Teachers," FL 267).
Teachers must always keep in mind that they should "give a child no theme above his
comprehension and capacity" (FL 267) because it will create frustration and
disappointment on both sides. "This forcing nature," Fern contends, "can result only in
total incapacity, or, at best, but crippled flights" (FL 267). In "Writing Composition,"
Fern again insists that "this 'composition' business is the greatest possible nonsense. I
believe it to be the baneful root of the inflated style of writing so prevalent. I believe that
there are exercises in English, which would serve the purpose millions of times better
without driving pupils mad, and without offering them a premium for deceit, in passing
off as their own the thoughts of others" (CS 170). Compulsion rendered to children does
not serve any purpose but making the compelled subject become "a bore and a cheat" (CS
170). It is time, Fern points out, that teachers recognize the harm a "Composition day"
has done to some children. It is never too late to revise a curriculum to make "education" a learning process as pleasant as possible. In short, teachers worthy of the title are those who do not "see only dollars and cents in the glorious vocation [they have] adopted," who do not "expect to run all these children, like a pound of candles, into the same shaped and sized mould," and who "believe in individuality of character, whether male or female" ("My Summers in New England," FF 169). Competent school teachers, in Fern's view, are reasonable, uncompelling, and wholeheartedly devoted to students' academic growth and welfare in general.

Having experienced a boarding school first hand, Fern zealously dissuades parents from sending their children to be educated in such an institution. She warns mothers to "Let neither your indolence, nor the omnipotent voice of fashion... induce you to remove [a daughter] from under your own personal care and supervision, at the time when the physique of this future wife and mother requires a lynx-eyed watchfulness... which no institute ever has... ever will supply" ("Girls' Boarding-Schools," FL 68). Long years of confinement in a boarding school with "insufficient exercises... imperfect ventilation, and improper companionship" normally yield negative results on its graduates. A "rosy, healthy, simple hearted child" is inevitably transformed to a "pale, languid, spineless, dressy young woman, with a smattering of fashionable accomplishments, and an incurable distaste of simple, home pleasures" (FL 70). There is no supervision more effective on children than that of the parents.

Scrupulous parental supervision is sometimes needed for disciplining children as well. Fern, an advocate of equality for all and a supporter of democracy in the household,
often times proposes that parents need to enforce children's obedience with
reasonableness. Parents should be careful not to be too lenient with their children's
improper behavior. Parents' early disciplinary action will only result in their children
being well-behaved and respectable. It will also save parents from "great trouble in the
future." Fern insists that parents have to "learn to say No--and take time to enforce it . . .
and remember once fought it is done with forever" ("Mistakes about Our Children," FF
308). Fern's experience as a grandmother of a motherless child makes her admit that
disciplining is difficult at the first time, but she contends, "be firm as a rock; recede not
one inch; there may be two, three, or even more [struggle], but the battle once won . . . it is
won for this world . . . perhaps for another" ("Parent and Child; or, Which Shall Rule," FL
219). In short, Fern contends, "if parents had but a firm hand to govern, and yet a ready
ear for childish sympathy . . . if parents would not forget that they were once children, nor
. . . forget that their children will be one day parents . . . we should then have no beardless
skeptics, no dissolute sons, no runaway marriages" (FL 219). In other words, children's
future depends almost entirely on parental hands.

As important as disciplining children to have respectable manners is their
acquiring sufficient religious knowledge. In "The Angel-Child," Fern argues that a child,
living in a large and splendid house, physically fed and clothed, yet learning no moral
lessons from her parents is equal to a motherless child. (FL1, 292) To Fern, moral
teaching does not necessarily mean that parents have to take children to church every
Sunday. Religious knowledge can be acquired everywhere provided that parents are truly
concerned with their children's spiritual thirst. In fact, Fern disagrees with children's
being "muffled up to the tip of your little nose[s] in woolen wrappers, in a close, crowded church, nodding your little drowsy heads, and keeping time to the sixth-lie and seventh-lie of some pompous theologian, whose preaching would have been high Dutch to you, had you been wide awake" ("Children's Rights," FL1, 189). Instead Fern suggests in "What Shall We Do for the Little Children on Sunday?" that rather than forcing children to be "fidgeting and squirming in their out door wrappings, in a hot, crowded, badly ventilated church, to whom the services are a dead language, and who prevent those around them from worship, through pity for their evident uncomfortableness," parents should make Sunday the "cheerfullest day of all the week" (GS 34 35). Sympathizing with children, Fern concludes, "the God who opens the flowers on Sunday, and lets the birds sing, did not mean that we should close our eyes to the one or our ears to the other, or that we should throw a pall over the little children" (GS 36). Sufficient moral lessons are needed for children's spiritual growth, yet they should not be forced; otherwise, they will become repulsive to children and yield no beneficial results at all.

Fern's fame for her compassion for children is understandable through her writing. Her perception of children's roles as saviors who convert parents morally and religiously is distinctive. More importantly, Fern's stance as an advocate for children's rights and their acceptance as individuals is persistent and unrelenting. Best of all, Fern's endeavor for improvement in children's education, health, manners, and religious knowledge marks her as a unique humanitarian and a zealous fighter who never recedes in whatever she believes are the needs of helpless children. Often times, Fern exclaims, "I wish I was mother to the whole of you! Such glorious times as we'd have!... Fanny is sick of din,
and strife, and envy, and uncharitableness! . . . she'd rather . . . live in a little world full of fresh, guileless, loving little children, than in this great museum full of such dry, dusty, withered hearts" ("Children's Rights," FL1, 191). Fern undoubtedly deserves the title of "a fighting mother" for all.
The Puritans believed that children were born in sin and inherited innate depravity as a consequence of Adam's fall. Although they died too young to accomplish any good deeds or to commit any sin of their own, children, if they were not the elect, were doomed to dwell in hell. However, as a solace to bereaved parents, Michael Wiggleworth lamely attempted to show the leniency of God's punishment toward children in *The Day of Doom*. He wrote:

    You sinners are, and such a share
    As sinners may expect.
    Such you shall have, for I do save
    None but my own elect... .

A crime it is, therefore in bliss
You may not hope to dwell;
But unto you I shall allow
The easiest room in hell.

The idea of children dwelling in "the easiest room in hell" is not so comforting when one realizes that

    The least degree of miserie
    there felt is incomparable
    The lightest pain...
    more than intolerable.

For more information on the Puritan belief of infant damnation, see E. Douglas Branch's
Fern's graphic writing about children's deaths and her strong belief of their being well taken care of in heaven not only reflects her method of coping with an intense grief she personally experienced from the death of her first child Mary Eldredge at the age of seven, but, in a way, many of Fern's portrayals of small children's deathbed scenes also indicate her response to a distinctively high death rate of the youngsters in that period.

Thomas J. Schlereth in Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915 contends that "Infant mortality affected a high proportion of families. Ten out of every hundred infants—and one out of every five black newborns—died by the age of one. Death came not only from birthing complications but from diseases and infections," 273-74.

Ann Douglas also concurs in "Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1880" (American Quarterly, 26:5, 1974: 496-515) that "a widespread and valid sense of loss and deprivation" people felt in that period caused the popularity of the consolation literature that "incessantly stressed the importance of dying and the dead: it encouraged elaborate funerary practices, conspicuous methods of burial and commemoration, and microscopic viewings of a much inflated afterlife" (496-97). The examples of such literature are B. F. Barret's Beauty for Ashes, warranting the everlasting happiness of dead children in the realm of guardian angels, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps'
The Gates Ajar, recounting the afterworld of eternal bliss and merriment.

Fern's protest of excessive school hours is well grounded. E. Douglas Branch in The Sentimental Years: 1836-1860 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934) also concurs that "Even in schools where 'mildnesse [sic], and gentle entreatie' was the mode, the scholars were under physical strain. The school-day was inordinately long, and there were six school-days in the week," 299). However, the matter of school-children's ill health is not perceived as a result of overwork from school. Branch contends that a Committee of Inquiry found the teachers amazed at the suggestion that the scholars' tasks were excessive. They suggested that it was the result of "indulgence in confectionery, late hours and excitement at parties, 'chewing pitch,' and other indiscretions which it was the province of the parents to correct," 301. Interestingly, however, Branch quotes Thomas Wentworth Higginson's famous article entitled "The Murder of the Innocents," published in The Atlantic for September of 1859 detailing the daily schedule of students at a well known seminary thus:

The girls rose at five and studied until the breakfast hour (seven or eight), then were in the class room for six consecutive hours, until two. After dinner, from three to five, they had opportunity to attend to their sewing, letter-writing, school politics, and all the small miscellanies of existence. From five to six was a study-hour; six to seven was 'tea'; and two hours were left for study until bedtime." 301-302).
They who have passed many milestones on the journey of life, with their faces toward the Celestial City, do not stop to ask those who pass them on the road, of their creeds or nationalities. They see only the brother or sister, to whom the helping hand and sympathizing word in time may be life and death for this world and the next. This is the true Christ spirit.

Fanny Fern's "Sunday in the Village."

*Ginger-Snaps* (GS), 219.

In accord with its being a democratic country that greatly values independence and individualism, nineteenth-century America was unique in its religious diversity and its celebration of religious freedom. Transcendentalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Universalists offered distinctive possible ways to God. Different in religious beliefs yet somewhat similar in their acceptance of God and of His intimacy with humans, Americans claimed themselves to be a religious people. Thomas J. Schlereth in *Victorian*
America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915 contends that "Evangelical crusades for temperance, sabbath keeping, home missions, and Sunday schools involved thousands striving for a Christian America. Church membership and attendance increased steadily from 1870 to 1920" (260). Such great preachers as William Ellery Channing, Henry Ward Beecher, Dwight L. Moody, Phillips Brooks, Theodore Parker, and Sylvester Judd were renowned for their distinguished oratorical powers and warmly welcomed as successful representatives of their denominations.

Although Catholicism brought along with an influx of Irish immigrants, was widespread, Calvinistic Protestantism was evidently dominant. Two major revivifications known as the Great Awakening of 1740-44 and the Second Great Awakening of 1797-1840 warranted its preponderance. Catherine Clinton in The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century asserts that a religious movement of this sort "was a concerted effort on the part of ministers and the Christian devout to rekindle a spirit of enthusiasm among the people and to counter the disintegration of organized religion" (42). The Calvinist doctrines of original sin and total depravity, however, glorified God at the expense of human self-esteem and honor. In spite of the fact that the existence of hell, as Peter Gregg Slater argues in Children in the New England Mind: In Death and in Life, "was beginning to be widely questioned and even many of the Orthodox undoubtedly had a less tangible sense of the Satanic kingdom than had their grandparents," the belief of the torments of the damned and the comforts of the Elect was still prevalent. (50) The terrors of God and the concerns for an afterlife remained.
Born in a pious family and raised by parents who are Calvinists, Fanny Fern on many occasions through her writing expresses strong disapproval of the repressive nature of Calvinism. James Parton, Fern's third and last husband, warrants Fern's opposition to stern Calvinistic doctrines in Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume that "From childhood to the end of her days, as I have heard her often say, she found herself unable to believe either that she was a very depraved sinner, or that she was in any danger of everlasting perdition" (28). Moreover, Parton asserts that Fern "might be described as a natural Universalist" because "All the other parts of the orthodox faith she accepted, and held to as long as she lived" (28). To Fern, God was caring, merciful, and kind-hearted.

Evidence of Fern's firm stand in her religious beliefs which obviously differ from that of her parents, appears in many pieces of her writing throughout her career. Having a father as a deacon of Park Street Church, Fern recollects her childhood home in "The Prophet's Chamber" and in "Justice for Clergymen" that the house "was, to all intents and purposes, a ministerial tavern--lacking the sign... the 'Prophet's Chamber'... that never... was unoccupied more than time enough 'to clear it up'" (FL1, 215; GS 139). Fern's close and constant contact with many visiting Calvinist ministers in her childhood years does not alter her optimistic opinion about God. She records in "Justice for Clergymen" that "I was a wild slip in those days; that's why [the ministers] always 'wanted a little conversation with Sarah.'... I had been told so often that I was 'a child of wrath,' that I had it at my fingers' end" (GS 139). The Calvinist ministers never succeeded in their attempts to convince Fern of her total depravity. When asked of her feelings toward God, Fern "persisted I loved God" and would never believe that she "was born by him to be
tormented. The flowers, the clouds, the ocean, the sun, moon, and stars—what priceless gifts were they! No 'doctrine' or 'creed' could rob me of them; and didn't he make them, and give me a soul to enjoy them?" (GS 139). A wrathful God does not exist in Fern's reasoning system.

Fern's rebellion against Calvinist ministers centers on their forceful and compelling ways of presenting to her an unacceptable image of an angry God who is desirous for vengeance against human beings. She reasons in "Justice for Clergymen" that she does not "hate these ministers for trying to darken what should have been, and what was, in spite of them, youth's festival hour. I knew they thought they were right, and I believe them to be truly good, though mistaken men" (GS 139). It is difficult for Fern, who was born with a strong fighting spirit for equality, to accept such a repressive notion that God is a tyrant. She asserts that these ministers do not realize that "child as I was, if I ever went to Heaven, it would be taking hold of my Heavenly Father's hand, not cowering before him through fear of 'hell'" (GS 139-40). A pessimistic image of God presented by the ministers who frequented her childhood home not only heightens her defiance of their preaching, but it also intensifies her own optimistic belief toward the Almighty. Fern admits that her resistance would not have been so intense, "had they only known how to talk to me, instead of driving me within myself, and making me put my worst religious foot foremost" (GS 140). The imprints of their mistakes last to the end of Fern's life.

Fern's resolute belief in a kind and caring God is noteworthy. The fact that her parents were both Calvinistic devotees does not affect her optimistic faith. James Parton observed Fern's parents' intense religiousity by noting that they were deeply influenced by
the Reverend Edward Payson, "a genuine, natural orator" who "had a most penetrating, symp pathetic, melodious voice," who "abounded in apt, original, and striking illustrations," and who "carried what was called the orthodox belief to its uttermost extreme" (19).²

Impressed with the Reverend's gentle manners and his zealousness, Fern "had her full share of the love and admiration which the family entertained for Dr. Payson" (James Parton, 31). However, Fern's admiration of the preacher does not convince her to become a convert of Calvinistic Christianity. In James Parton's words, "nature had not formed her for a saint, and the attempt to make her one was but partially successful" (31).

Fern's affection and appreciation of the Reverend Edward Payson are apparent in her newspaper articles. She affirms his distinctive qualities as a preacher in "Sunday in the Village": "Since I heard Dr. Payson, of Portland, when he reached out pleading hands to win wayward feet into the path of life, I have never been so entirely satisfied with the delivery of the Master's message" (GS 217). The preacher's "dignity . . . the pleading earnestness . . . the deep, rich voice . . . the appreciative way of reading the hymns . . . the heart-tone in every syllable" enhance his genuineness. Moreover, Fern testifies, "There was no narrowness, no bigotry, no uncharitable denunciation; and at the same time, no blinking of the truth--and the whole truth" (GS 217). The spectacular ministerial qualities that Edward Payson encompasses seem to be revivified in later years in Fern's former acquaintance Henry Ward Beecher. Fern dedicated a column "Henry Ward Beecher" to glorify his distinctiveness. She writes, "The preacher is remarkable for fertility of imagination, for rare felicity of expression, for his keen perception of the complicated and mysterious workings of the human heart, and for the uncompromising boldness with
which he utters his convictions" (FL2, 287). Fern asserts that it is no wonder Henry Ward Beecher gained his popularity and a church full of energetic audience the same way Edward Payson did. She concludes, "His earnestness of manner, vehemence of gesture and rapidity of utterance, are, at times, electrifying; impressing his hearers with the idea that language is too poor and meager a medium for the rushing tide of his thoughts" (FL2, 287).

Fern's relationship with the Reverend Edward Payson never falters. Having had an opportunity to visit Portland, her birthplace, later in life, Fern fails to uncover the house she was born in. Yet, the sight of Edward Payson's church brings back her vivid memory of the beloved preacher, who, Fern contends in "My Journey to Quebec and Back Again," "by his sweet, consistent, loving, holy life, came between me and the grim creed which my very soul spurned, and which was driving me to disbelieve all of which his Christ-like life was the beautiful exponent" (CS 213). Fern's resistance to the Calvinistic doctrines that Edward Payson embodies, however, does not in the least affect her esteem of his personality. To Fern, Payson's respect for her beliefs earns her trust. She certifies that Edward Payson "laid holy hands of blessing on my baby-forehead, and knew God's creatures too well to try to drive them, through fear of endless torment, to heaven" (CS 213). Fern's unwavering belief in a compassionate God prevails when she relates her memories of Edward Payson, "I felt like crossing myself, as I passed the church where his feet had so often entered, to tell, in that most musical of voices, of God's infinite love to everything He had made--of God's infinite pity--but why attempt to convey an idea of what must have been heard to be understood and felt?" (CS 213). The preacher Fern
thoroughly and wholeheartedly admires does not interfere with her reverence of God.

Although Fern had personally undergone many miserable experiences of deaths, poverty, and self-degradation, she is nevertheless unyieldingly determined in her belief of the Almighty's unconditioning love and forgiveness. Fern contends in "An Infidel Mother" that without such consolation, humans "have no anchor, no rudder or compass!—your little bark is adrift, at the mercy of every pitiless gale—the sea is dark and fearful, the billows mountain high, the sky black with darkness" (FL1, 196). Faithful trust in God will lead to eternal happiness. A similar consoling message representing Fern's faith in God appears in "Cemetery Musings." Fern writes, "your God is love. Into His hands [a beloved one] is now placed confidingly, lead wheresoever He may, to fall asleep on His bosom in His own good time" (CS 291). Imploring for a more optimistic viewpoint toward God, Fern asserts, "Why should you read, 'Prepare each day the funeral shroud.' Why should you fetter your simple, sweet faith in 'Our Father' by chains of fear, through which, all your lifetime, you 'should be subject to bondage'? Why for you should skulls be disinterred and dry bones held up to startle and affright?" (CS 291). Fighting against her contemporaries' notion of a fearful image of God, Fern contends, "I said to myself, Oh why, when the warm, throbbing heart of life is so slow to comprehend the unseen, and so tenaciously clings to the things seen, should it have hindrance, instead of help, in its efforts to spell out immortality!" (CS 291). Confidence in the Almighty is what Fern strenuously calls for.

Time and again Fern evokes her readers' awareness of the necessity to reexamine themselves, their religious faith, and the state of their souls. In her opinion, the causes of
human misery are logically explainable. She strongly disagrees with those who, upon encountering unfortunate events, exclaim, "it was 'an overruling Providence'." To Fern, it is unfair to blame God for human carelessness. In "The Soul and the Stomach," Fern fervently maintains that "God is good, though all else fail, and we, like insects, creep and complain; God is good . . . He who has bid us care for the soul, bids us also care for the body" (FL 106). It is everybody's duty to maintain both physical and spiritual health. In favor of the Almighty, Fern argues, "If we neglect the laws of health, and abuse our bodies, even in His service, he does not quaranty to the delinquent, a strong mind, an unperverted spiritual vision—clouds and darkness will come between us and the Sun of Righteousness" (FL 106). Failure to provide sufficient care for one's body and soul not only results in physical weaknesses, but it also shrouds possible spiritual awakening, as Fern remarks, "though we shall feel after Him, we shall grope like children in the dark" (FL 106). It is essential that humans have courage to take full responsibility for themselves and cease condemning supernatural forces for their wrongdoing and wretchedness.

Fern's earnest argument in favor of a merciful God repeatedly appears. She reveals humans' unfairness toward the Immortal in "Blaming Providence for Our Own Faults": "I have to smile sometimes at poor 'Providence'—that convenient scapegoat for all the human stupidity extant" (CS 72). This unfounded allegation, Fern contends, runs against her perception of the Almighty. "This 'All-Wise Providence,'" Fern points out, "as some would have us believe, is malignantly and perpetually employed in tripping up the heels of human beings for the benefit of the undertaker" (CS 72). To Fern, this is an
unjust accusation; "what a convenient theology for bad cooks, for unwise school-teachers, for selfish, careless, ignorant parents!" (CS 72). Fern is reasonable in her assertion that "Providence' does no such things." As a logical human being who believes in cause and effect, Fern maintains that God does not "bend spines, nor make drunkards, nor thieves, nor write a shameful history on the pure brow of any woman who ever has or ever shall live; he don't [sic] ordain perpendicular ghosts of ministers, to defile sepulchrally through creation, and scare people into heaven" (CS 72-73). Disgusted with human hypocrisy and irresponsibility, Fern proposes "It is high time that people shouldered their own sins, and called things by their right names, and told the truth at funerals, and on tombstones, if they must say anything there . . . an 'All-Wise and inscrutable Providence' has borne quite blasphemy enough in this way" (CS 73). God, Fern insists, is an embodiment of infinite love and forgiveness.

In Fern's view, religious prosperity almost entirely depends on ministers' roles and their moral stature. Fern contends that most of the time people attend church and listen to sermons for self-consolation. It is significant, therefore, that church-goers receive cheerfulness and encouragement from such participation. A grim image of ministers needs to be extinguished. Instead, God's messenger worthy of carrying out his sacred duty, as Fern illustrates in "Notes on Preachers and Preaching," should be "merry himself." In other words, he is a representation of "a brisk-stepping, square-shouldered, broad-chested, round human being, whom it is pleasant to look at and comforting to listen to" (FF 100). In short, Fern argues, "The more Christianity [a minister] has, the more cheerful he is, and ought to be" (FF 99).
Ministers’ cheerfulness in delivering God’s message is as important as their consistent earnestness in both large and small congregations. Fern contends in "Petting" that preaching to a small number of worshipers is "a test" to prove "whether one's heart is in his work" (CS 286). A minister who earnestly delivers his message in a thin congregation shows that "he has a realizing sense of the value of even one soul" (CS 286). A clergyman who can maintain consistency in his preaching is praiseworthy. He is certain to be "just as eloquent and just as earnest when speaking to a thin audience, as if he were addressing a large multitude, from whose eager, upturned faces he might well draw inspiration" (CS 286). Only through such ministers can their sacred duties be triumphantly fulfilled.

An inspiring message from God's messengers is critical to church members who have endured hardships in one form or another throughout the week. In other words, a presentation of God as wrathful and cruel in His retribution does not alleviate their pain or sufferings. On the contrary, it intensifies their present distressful conditions as well as increases their anxiety concerning an afterlife. Annoyed with such a pessimistic doctrine, Fern asks in "Notes upon Preachers and Preaching," "Why will clergymen persist in scaring people to heaven? Why darken lives heavily laden with toil, discouragement, and care through the six days of the week, by adding to its depressing weight on Sunday? (FF 97). Fern's resentment of hard-hearted ministers prevails in "Women's Need of Recreation." She contends, "when I open a church door, and the first sentence I hear is about 'An Awful God,' I sometimes want to invite the speaker to rest himself a bit, and let me try my hand at it" (CS 184). Attending such services is a torture, not an
enlightenment.

Fern's pursuit of consolation from church is persistent. She maintains in "Women's Need of Recreation" that church-goers, particularly married women, seek "soothing, and comforting, and encouraging, more than denouncing or frightening, even though the latter be done with good intentions" (CS 184). Unpromising and petrifying message of God's cruelty and indifference to humans is not what church-goers anticipate. Disturbed with some ministers' pessimistic viewpoint toward God, Fern asks in "Has 'Come unto me ye heavy laden' no place in their Bible? Is 'God is love' blotted out from its pages? Is the human heart--especially the youthful heart--untouchable by any appeal save the cowardly one of fear?" ("Notes upon Preachers and Preaching," FF 97).

Apparently, Fern is unrelenting in her striving for solace and encouragement from the religion she believes in.

Fern's petition for practical and realistic ministers predominates throughout her writing career. She asserts in "Sunday in the Village" that as a New England born, she wants "a hymn and a prayer on Sunday . . . and a sermon too" (GS 216). Most of the time, however, she admits that she is disappointed with the sermons. She argues,

I want to know how to live; and the Rev.--only tells me that I've 'got to die.' I want to know how to manage with today; and the Rev.--only speculates about what may and what may not be in eternity. I want to be soothed, and helped, and propped, and comforted; and the Rev.--tries to scare me with an 'angry God,' and a 'sure damnation.' (GS 216-17)

To Fern, such sermons drive people away from God instead of drawing them to Him.
Firmly believing in a caring and sympathetic God, Fern reasons in "Justice for Clergymen" that "Terror never yet made a true Christian. Frigidity never yet glorified God. The world is not a charnel-house. Else the blue sky would have been as black as some of these ascetics fain would make it" (GS 144). Attending pessimistic preaching is valueless and unprofitable. A prospect of being the damned does not ease one's immediate sufferings; on the contrary, it warrants fear of more agony in the spiritual world to come.

Similar earnest and impelling pleas for optimistic and consoling messages from God's messengers continually appear in Fern's newspaper columns. Expressing her strong and joyful attachment to churches and their services in "Notes upon Preachers and Preaching," Fern, however, contends that she relishes more of an opportunity to bring back with her food for thoughts "to fight the devil through the week" (FF 88). In addition, she asserts that the sermons would be of more practical value if they contained "something for to-day . . . Something live; something that has some bearing on our daily work; something that recognizes the seething elements about us, and their bearings on the questions of conscience and duty we are all hourly called on to settle" (FF 88-89). Only ministers with initiative and intrepidity can bring forth such productive sermons. In Fern's opinion, they are those who "won't forever take refuge in 'the Ark,' for fear of saying something that conservatism will hum! and ha! over" (FF 89). In short, Fern urges that ministers be progressive, "set fire" to their libraries and "study human nature more" (FF 89). Fern's message is crucial in her comment that "We have got to live on earth a while before we 'get to heaven.' It might be as well to consider that occasionally. It is
quite as important to show us how to live here as how to get there" (FF 89). Life, transient as it is, sustains its own significance. Only through proper guidance will it be lived to the utmost, not only in this world, but perhaps in the next world.

Repeatedly, Fern urges that preachers be more compassionate and sympathetic. Discontented with uncaring ministers, Fern exclaims, "What a pity people will not fulfill their destiny, and stay in their own proper niche in this world's gallery! Why will they mistake their vocation?" ("Not a Model Minister," FL1, 294). Furthermore, she contends in "Sunday Morning" that she would not go to church every Sunday "to hear a man who was always binding doctrines together like bundle of dry sticks, and thrusting them at his yawning hearers" (GS 129). Emphasizing simplicity, Fern asserts her preference for a sermon that "any poor soul who straggles into church, from any by-lane or alley, can understand, and carry home with him to his cellar or garret, not a sermon that comes on a chariot wheels, but afoot" (GS 129). In other words, Fern promotes a "human sermon," which is not from "a theological bookworm," but from "somebody who is sometimes tempted and tried, and is not too dignified to own it; somebody . . . who is always sinning and repenting" (GS 130). Fern persists that only a common man who errs and repents his sins can understand temptation and can preach. In short, she shuns "a spiritual abstraction, with stony eyes and petrified fingers, and no blood to battle with" (GS 130). Were there only such ministers, Fern contends that she would abstain from going to church because her "impatient feet would only beat a tattoo on the pew floor till service was over" (GS 130). Evidently, Fern values the practicality of the ministers' message as of primary significance to all church-goers.
Fern pleads not only for the deliverance of real-life subject matter, but also for simple and ordinary language for the lay audience. In "Stones for Bread," Fern requests preachers to "preach about something that will come home to the worn, weary, tried heart" who is "vexed enough already with its life-burthens" (CS 311). Fern contends that a preacher's failure to get his message across is a result of his "entangling [his audience] in theological nets, till the blessed voice that says so sweetly, 'Come unto Me,' never reaches the perplexed ears" (CS 311). Incomprehensible preaching is, therefore, of no value. In addition, Fern argues that it is only pitiful for these "hungry souls" who "every Sunday beg for bread, receive only a stone; and go away to take up their daily burden again on Monday, with faltering, hopeless step, when they might and should march—singing the song of triumph!" (CS 311). At any rate, Fern insists that the benefits of sermons for church-goers could be manifold if clergymen "look at the dead faces of men's lost joys and hopes, and pity the bereaved, lonely hearts, that want something to lean upon besides cold, dull abstractions; that yearn for the warm, beating, pulsating heart of Infinite Love" (CS 312). Only through realistic and encouraging preaching can preachers boast of their well-executed mission on earth.

Fern's proposal for simplicity is not exclusive for ministers' language and the sermon's content. She time and again calls for humble and unembellished decorations in church. As a sacred institution, a church should allow its members an opportunity to concentrate on the reexamination of their souls. Moreover, Fern argues that churches should promote the virtues of plainness and naturalness. In "New-York Sunday," Fern illustrates her admiration of nature that almost all churches in New York "have 'ivy green'
clambering over the windows and turrets, and pretty willow treees drooping their graceful branches about the doorways" (LF 284). Despite these churches' inartificial beauty, Fern is disgusted with their stained-glass windows. To her, they deflect one's concentration. She maintains, "It is our duty to go to church; and it is wrong to think of anything else in church but worshipping God" (LF 285). Unfortunately for church-goers, Fern points out, "there's so much display, and show, and fashion now-a-days, in the churches--so much to distract the thoughts--so much hollow pretension to piety, that I sometimes feel . . . that I would rather worship amid the green hills, like the old persecuted Covenanters" (LF 285). The more fashionable the church, the more distasteful it is to Fern.

Fern's preference for ordinarily-decorated churches over elaborately adorned ones is evident. She describes a simple but practical church in "Father Taylor, the Sailor's Preacher" that "there are no stained-glass windows--no richly draperied pulpit--no luxurious seats to suggest a nap to your sleepy conscience" (FL2, 292). To the rich and the pretentious, Fern addresses, "no odor of patchouli, or nonpareil, or boueet de violet will be wafted across your patrician nose. Your satin and broadcloth will fail to procure you the highest seat in the synagogue--they being properly reserved for the 'old salts'" (FL2, 292). The church's simplicity reminds Fern of her memorable girlhood experience in a New Hampshire village where "Sundays were not opening days for millenery; where people went to church because they loved it, and not because it was 'respectable' ("Notes upon Preachers and Preaching," FF 94). In short, Fern's ideal church is "plain and neat, and nicely dressed . . . the temperature, the bright lights, and the sweet tones of the organs [are] all promotive of serenity and cheerfulness. The congregation . . . [are] not
fashionable people . . . [but] workers on week-days" (FF 95). A champion of equality for all, Fern shuns pretenses of all kinds.

Earnestly opposing excessive church decorations, Fern states that she derives her religious content from a small, humble church. She graphically portrays her uneasiness in ornately decorative churches in "The Fashionable Preacher" that "I can't get up any devotion here, under these latticed balconies, with their fashionable freight ... my soul is in fetters here; it won't soar--its wings are earth-clipped. Things are all too fine!" (FL2, 230). A distraction of one's soul is inevitable in such an environment. To Fern, "a good old country church, with a cracked bell and unhewn rafters, a pine pulpit, with the honest sun staring in through the windows, a pitch-pipe in the gallery, and a few hob-nailed rustics scattered round in the uncushioned seats" is more suitable to peace-seeking souls (FL2, 230). It is comforting, however, to believe that "the unspoken prayer of penitence may wing its way to the Eternal Throne, though our mocking church spires point only with aristocratic fingers to the rich man's heaven" (FL2, 230). Elaborately-ornamented churches not only symbolize pretentiousness, but they also designate the separation and classification of their members.

An advocate of equality for all, Fern vigorously calls for a fair and equal treatment of each and every church member. In "Sunday in Gotham," Fern harshly criticizes a sexton's prejudicial practices she had witnessed. Working in a church for the rich, "the portly sexton" welcomes his parishioners at the church door. First and foremost he glances at their outward appearance. If the "hat and coat are new," he "graciously escorts [the owner] to an eligible seat in the broad aisle" (FL 325). If a visitor happens to be "a
poor, meek, plainly-clad seamstress, reprieved from her treadmill round, to think one day in seven of the Immortal," the sexton "is struck with a sudden blindness" (FL 325). The poor woman, in embarrassment, "retraces her steps, and with a crimson blush, recrosses the threshold, which she had profaned with her plebian foot" (FL 325). The sexton's prejudice against the poor is in accord with the clergyman's dishonesty to his profession. He "values his fat salary and his handsome parsonage too highly. So with a velvet-y tread his walks around the ten commandments, places the downiest of pillows under the dying profligate's head, and ushers him with seraphic hymning into an upper-ten heaven" (FL 325). Equal religious rights for people in all walks of life will be truly established with a church's expression of "We are all equal, all welcome here." To Fern, "this is Christianity--this is the Sabbath--this is millennial" (FL 327). An urgent elimination of religious hypocrisy will make possible an equal opportunity for all.

Fern's desire for non-discrimination in church is earnest and compelling. Often she insists that the function of churches as sacred institutions is to quench spiritual thirst for all mankind. Therefore, it is necessary that all churches be equally accessible to the needy, regardless of class, rank, or wealth. Greatly disturbed with inequality in church, Fern contends in "Sunday Morning" that "The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all! should be inscribed outside my church door, had I one" (GS 131-32). A similar message promoting equality recurs in "Notes upon Preachers and Preaching." Fern states, "I wish that nobody could own a velvet cushioned pew in church; that the doors of all churches were open to all, in whatsoever garb they might chance to wear in passing, and not parcelled and divided off for the reception of certain
classes, and the exclusion . . . of those who most need spiritual help and teaching" (FF 91). No human being should be deprived of an equal opportunity for moral elevation and spiritual consolation that religion can provide.

Fern's resentment of excessively decorated churches is in accord with her opposition to immoderately clothed people who attend church services. Her criticism of such ostentatious groups is more severe on female members. In "Sunday Morning," Fern announces that these women are "so given over to the devil and all his works;" therefore, they are "past praying for; having eyes, they see not; having ears, they hear not. They are ossified, impervious; they are Dead-Sea apples, full of ashes" (GS 132). Denouncing both fashionable churches and pretentious people, Fern attains her spiritual delight from "the poor man's church." She asserts in "A Sunday Morning Soliloquy" that such churches are places where "the pale cheek of labor is not flushed with embarrassment as the robe of plenty sweeps past; where side by side, as they should, kneel mistress and maid, in God's presence, of one clay" (FL1, 264). Equality among church members is obviously celebrated as Fern relates, "The prayer-book, which has been handled by the statesman, passes through the toil-hardened hands of his servant. Thank God, one day in the week he can realize his soul is of as much value as his master's!" (FL1, 264). To Fern, the promotion of equal opportunity for all enables America to be worthy of recognition as a truly democratic country.

Not only does Fern promote equality among church members, but she also calls for their broad-mindedness in religious beliefs. Impressed with the religious liberality she witnessed in Plymouth, Fern states, "I find that nobody makes mouths at you for being a
Unitarian, or an Episcopolian, or of any other denomination that happens to suit your complaint" ("Notes from Plymouth Rock," GS 231). Fern contends furthermore that this religious freedom is a result of the Reverend Mr. Robinson's liberality. The parting sermon he presented to his followers that "there was a great deal of truth coming out ahead that they had not dreamed of as yet" is a true gospel to warn them against the "spiritual conceit which should close their eyes to the perception of [truth]" (CS 232).

The logical and respectable preaching of this minister "of the church in Holland from which 'the Mayflower' Christians came" represents "liberal Christianity" of which Fern suggests "Ministers, deacons, and the religious world generally take notice" (GS 232).

Seemingly religious people's narrow-mindedness stimulates Fern's earnest response. In "Spring in the City," Fern announces, "I rise to make a proposition ... that the name and denomination, and the name of the pastor, of our respective churches, should be neatly placed beside the principal entrance door, that strangers may be able to find those churches they desire" (CS 237). This proposal is a result of Fern's awareness of segregation in Christianity when she was asked by a stranger of the denomination of a New York church's pastor. A true Christian as she was, Fern contends, "I had to rub my head to remember, for creeds and denominations find little lodgment there. Provided I find Christianity, that's enough for me, and to my thinking, no one church has the monopoly of that" (CS 237). Religious liberality broadens one's perception of truth and eliminates prejudice.

Evidence of Fern's religious unconventionality and liberalness is in her earnest suggestion that Christians follow some good examples set by Catholics. Perceiving the
significance of churches as places of consolation for mankind, Fern contends in "Sunday Morning" that "I heartily wish that all our Protestant churches could be . . . opened [and are not] silent as the tomb on week-days" (GS 131). Well aware of a possibility that rich Christians may oppose this idea for fear of "the promiscuous use of their velvet cushions and gilded prayer-book," Fern urges the authority to "at least let the aisles and altar be free for those who need God on the week-days" (GS 131). In Fern's opinion, the daily opening of the church will certainly be beneficial "for the poor, the tried, the tempted; for those who shrink, in their shabby habiliments, from the Sunday exhibition of fine toilettes and superfine Christianity" (GS 131). Moreover, an accessibility of church on weekdays will also benefit a minister who is "obliged to preach to paniers and diamonds and satin on Sunday" (GS 131). Were she such a minister, Fern asserts, "I shoud have to ease my heart in some such way as this, to make my pastoral life endurable, else my office would seem to me the most hollow of all mockeries" (GS 131). Fern's genuine concern for the poor and the sufferers distinctively prevails.

Having personally experienced the poverty and bitter hardships of life as well as witnessed destitute conditions of the less fortunate people around her, Fern is well aware that equality for all does not truly exist. Moreover, society's prejudices and hypocrisy help worsen their conditions speedily. Time and again, Fern emphasizes through her columns the importance of each individual's devotion and earnestness to assist the unfortunate and to elevate their social conditions. To those who claim to be religious, Fern writes, "'Line upon line, precept upon precept' is well--but practice is better! Religion must not be all lip-service . . . true religion is not gloomy . . . Religion is not a
"fable" ("The Stray Sheep," FL2, 227-28). A true Christian spirit is in one's readiness to take action for a better condition of other human beings.

Fern's criticism of seemingly religious people concurs with her abhorrence of all pretenses. In "The Widow's Trials," Fern criticizes a man claiming to be "a rigid sectarian, of the bluest school of divinity" as a hypocrite. He considers that "It was his glory to be the Alpha and Omega of parish gatherings and committees . . . to be present at the laying of corner stones for embryo churches, to shine conspicuously at ordinations, donation visits, Sabbath-school celebrations" (FL1, 18). However, he is the embodiment of hard-heartedness and insincerity. Although he "pitied the poor, as every good Christian should," he "never allowed them to put their hands in his pocket --that was a territory over which the church had no control--it belonged entirely to the other side of the fence" (FL1, 19). Pretentiousness and hypocrisy make it almost impossible for an improved condition of the unfortunate.

Resenting hypocrisy of all kinds, Fern severely attacks ostentatious philanthropists, who out of their greediness, intensify the less fortunate's wretched conditions. In "Nicodemus Ney: A Dash at a Character Whom Everybody Has Seen," Fern condemns an avaricious person who shamelessly takes advantage of the poor. Fern asserts that such a person "goes about collecting ninepences and half-dollars from poor, overtasked servant girls, and half-fed clerks, for the founding of 'charitable institutions' for all sorts of distressed persons, who never knew what an unfortunate situation they were in, until he told them" (FL1, 315). His respectable appearance and his connection with the powerful nullify some donors' suspicion of his long journeys to "places of
fashionable resort" and his management of the collected funds. In great misery, the sufferers apparently need to turn to a man vowing to be on their side. To their surprise, the poor are shunned from his supposedly helping hand. Fern satirically remarks of such a selfish person, "you could not expect him to disturb his digestion by attending to such a petty case of distress. He is a great man, and only does things on a large scale—on a scale that will tell" (FL1, 316). Fern's strong contempt of hypocrisy is prevalent.

The satirical advice that Fern directs to the seemingly pious on encountering wretched and miserable fellowmen reflects her resentment of insincerity. She cautions her specific audience in "Mistaken Philanthropy" that "If a poor wretch—male or female—comes to you for charity... put on the most stoical, 'get thee behind me,' expression you can muster. Listen to him with the air of a man who 'thanks God he is not as other men are'" (FL1, 333). Should the depressing story bear an evidence of truth, Fern suggests, "button your coat up tighter over your pocket-book, and give him a piece of—good advice" (FL1, 333). Fern's attack on pretentiousness vigorously continues. She states, "Should you at any time be seized with an unexpected spasm of generosity, and make up your mind to bestow some worn-out old garment, that will hardly hold together till the recipient gets it home, you've bought him, body and soul" (FL1, 334). Fern's personal bitter experiences as a recipient of a grudging pittance enables her to portray a selfish and hypocritical mind graphically and realistically.

An embodiment of a fighting spirit, Fern energetically encourages the ill-fated to struggle against their misfortune. She reasons that discouragement and despair do not help improve their destitute conditions. In "Look Aloft," Fern proposes an effective
remedy for their distress: "get up and shake yourself, if you are not afraid such a mass of inanity will fall to pieces ... elbow your way through the crowd; if they don't move for you, make them do it; push past them" (FL 95). A believer in equal opportunity, Fern asserts, "you have as much right in the world as your neighbor. If you wait for him to take you by the hand, the grass will grow over your grave" (FL 95). Having practiced her own preaching, Fern warrants, "If you are determined, you can get employment; but you won't get it by cringing round the doors of rich relations ... you won't do it if you don't raise your head above every billow of discouragement which dashes over you, and haloo to Fate, with a stout heart" (FL 96). Determination eventually paves the way to success.

Fern's emphasis on the importance of independence is persistent throughout her writing career. Having experienced poverty first hand, Fern contends that it is natural for friends to fall off like "autumn leaves." Barely assisted in her widowhood struggle to earn an honest living, Fern denounces the proverb "Help yourself and then everybody else will help you." In "A False Proverb," Fern argues that an originator of such a proverb is "but the 'father of lies'. . . Is it not true as the book of Job that it's just driving the nails into your own coffin, to let anybody know you want help!" (FL2, 114). To reserve one's dignity, Fern asserts, "when sickness comes, or dark days, and your wits and nerves are both exhausted, don't place any dependence on this lying proverb!—or you will find yourself decidedly humbugged" (FL2, 114). An exhibition of one's wretchedness warrants only speedy ostracism. The maintainance of a respectable appearance is, therefore, a necessity. Fern declares, "if you have one nice garment left, out with it, put it on! turn your shawl on the brightest side; put your best and prettiest foot foremost; tie on
your go-to-meetin' bonnet, and smile under it! (FL2, 115). The dependent can find no place in a selfish and competitive society.

Optimistic confidence in the less fortunate's capabilities to fight for their betterment repeatedly appears in Fern's writing. In "I Can't," Fern resents an expression of hopelessness: "what a face, Doleful as a hearse; folded hands; hollow chest; whining voice" which represent "the very picture of cowardly irresolution" (FL1, 362). To embolden a despairing spirit, Fern argues, "Spring to your feet, hold up your head, set your teeth together, draw that fine form of yours up to the height that God made it; draw an immense long breath, and look about you ... all creation taking care of number one ... are you going to lie down and be crushed?" (FL1, 362). A strong fighter herself, Fern insists that unrelenting endeavors certainly lead to victory. Truly understanding the less fortunate's ordeal, Fern sincerely and fervently encourages their struggle. "If you can't get round a stump, Fern advises, "leap over it, high and dry. Have nerves of steel, a will of iron ... Set your target in the clouds, and aim at it ... Don't whine if your friends fall off. At the first stroke of good luck ... they will swarm around you like a hive of bees, till you are disgusted with human's nature" (FL1, 363).

Fern's encouragement to strengthen the less fortunate's will power illustrates her sincere concern for their well-being. She earnestly and continuously promotes the virtue of independence. In "How to Cure the Blues," she asserts, "If you are poor ... go to work like ten thousand evil spirits, and make yourself independent! and see with what a different pair of spectacles you'll get looked at. Nothing like it! You can have everything on earth you want, when you don't need a thing" (FL2, 183). A similar encouraging
message recurs in "Dollars and Dimes." Well aware of society's corruption as a consequence of industrialism, Fern vividly portrays the worship of wealth in the materialistic mind. To the ill-fated, Fern states, "Climb, man! climb! Go to the top of the ladder, though adverse circumstances and false friends break every round in it! and see what a glorious and extensive prospect of human nature you'll get when you arrive at the summit! (FL2, 212). Material wealth assures its possessor of respect and power, as Fern certifies: "You can't do anything wrong, now that your 'pocket is full.' At the most, it will only be 'an eccentricity'" (FL2, 213). Evidently, Fern's personal bitter experiences are intertwined in her sympathetic but realistic portrayal of the social scenes she had witnessed.

Although Fern is firm in her belief that determination and endurance lead to independence, she argues that society needs to render its assistance to certain types of the unfortunate. Many newspaper columns Fern writes depict the miserable conditions of prisons, unsuitable for both mental and physical well-being of prisoners. Fern's portrayal of ill treatment toward male and female convicts signifies her humanitarian concern for their situation. She doubts the effectiveness of the punishment system in the form of prison confinement. In "Blackwell's Island," Fern states, "I hate the bolts and bars, and I say this is not the way to make bad men good; or, at least if it be, these convicts should not, when discharged, be thrust out loose into the world with empty pockets, and a bad name, to earn a speedy 'through-ticket' back again" (CS 30-31). Having witnessed the wretched conditions of the prisoners, Fern argues, "I don't believe the way to restore a man's lost self-respect is to degrade him before his fellow-creatures; to brand him, and
chain him, and poke him up to show his points, like a hyena in a managerie" (CS 31). To Fern, a proper retribution is obviously not through humiliation.

Discontented with an ill treatment the convicts receive from their confinement, Fern entreats the authorities to take the prisoners' health and morale into serious consideration. In her visit to the Massachusetts State Prison, Fern records a depressing condition of the convicts in "Give the Convicts a Chance" that I shall never forget the poor wretches in the carding-room, breathing all day, and every day, the little fuzzy, floating particles, which set me coughing painfully the moment I entered the door" (FF 130). To the hard-hearted jailors, prisoners' health is not a concern. In "Fanny Ford," Fern also points out that "the furnaces failed to keep the prisoners from freezing in winter [and] there was no proper ventilation in summer" as well. (FL 134) Fern's insistence that the conditions of prisons need to be improved is reasonable. She contends in "Don't Get Angry" and "Give the Convicts a Chance" that "the convicts were allowed books to read in their cells on Sunday; but on examination of the cells, I found many so dark that even at midday the offer of 'books to read' would have been a mere mockery" (FF 131; LF 38). Without mental entertainment, prisoners' lives are torturing and remorseful.

As a social critic, Fern calls attention to the social conditions she considers unjust and offers a possible and practical solution. Not believing that humiliation and unhealthy confinement will rectify human behavior, Fern proposes, "I would have you startle up his self-respect by placing him in a position to show that you trusted him; I would have you give him something to hold in charge, for which he is in honor responsible; appeal to his better feelings, or if they smoulder almost to extinction, fan them into a flame for him"
("Blackwell's Island," CS 31). Trusting in humans' basically good nature, Fern writes, "Surely as God lives, there is a window in the soul of every debased man and woman, at which Love and Mercy may knock and whisper, and be heard" ("Give the Convicts a Chance," FF 132). Fern urges that the convicts' repentance should earn them a suitable place in society. She is also progressive in her suggestion that ex-convicts should receive vocational training and employment after their release to enable them to regain social acceptance. Fern writes, "when [humanity] knocks off the convict's fetters, and lands him on the opposite shore, let her not turn her back and leave him there as if her duty were done; but let her there erect a noble institution where he can find a kind welcome and instant employment; before temptation, joining hands with his necessities, plunge him again headlong into the gulf of sin" (CS 31). Fern insists that society play an important role in restoring the repentant on their feet socially, morally, and psychologically.

A Christian and a humanitarian, Fern's forgiveness for the repentant is boundless. Often, Fern blames society for its hypocrisy and indifference toward the poor and the needy. In Fern's view, society ought to be responsible for its members' well-being. On the contrary, its worship of materialist's value and its moral deterioration help worsen the wretched conditions of the poor, particularly of women. A limited availability of professions for females and a pitiful remuneration for their honest labor, more often than not, entice them to transgression and shamelessness. Instead of condemning those who fall into a sinful path and stigmatizing them as outcasts, Fern urges that society give them a helping hand and encourage them to live a righteous life.

Uneducated and unskilled, many women were employed as domestics. In
"Soliloquy of a Housemaid." Fern vividly portrays a servant's long continuous day of labor. A maid is normally provided with shelter and food, but she is deprived of freedom. Through a servant's eyes, Fern writes, "Wonder if my mistress ever thinks I am made of flesh and blood? . . . A kind word would ease the wheels of my treadmill amazingly, and wouldn't cost them anything, either" (FL2, 85). Fern furthermore contends that most of the time servants are not allowed to attend church on Sunday and are expected to work more because of visitors. The servant who misses such opportunity contends, "If I own a soul I have not heard how to take care of it for many a long day. Wonder if my master and mistress calculate to pay me for that, if I lose it? It is a question in my mind . . . I aint sure I've got a mind" (FL2, 86). Although sheltered and fed, a servant is practically confined in her position.

Sympathizing with servants' weary, monotonous, and repressive lives, Fern earnestly asks masters and mistresses to be humane and considerate. Enduring extraordinarily longer hours than laborers in any other professions, servants need more leisure and holidays. In "Poverty and Independence," Fern's message to employers is that, "you must look at this subject [of holidays] with [servants'] eyes, instead of your own; through their privations, instead of through your privileges, if you would be just" (GS 118). A constant reexamination of one's treatment of his or her employees is Fern's emphasis in "Some Every-Day Topics." She inquires, "How do you treat your household servants? . . . Are they overworked? Underpaid? indifferently fed? Do you ever give them a holiday? Do you ever lend them a book to read of a leisure evening? Do you ever give them a leisure evening?" (FF 324). Although they are unfortunately born in an
inferior condition, servants as well as other types of working people have their rights to be treated equally and generously as human beings. "A kind word, Fern argues, "is such a little thing to you--so much to her. Your cup is so full to overflowing--hers often so empty, so tasteless. And kindness so wings the feet of duty. Think of it" (FF 325). Hard-working people well deserve fair reciprocation after all.

Contempting a suppressive life of housemaids, many women, desirous for freedom, turn to factories for a more decent working situation. Although they do not earn much for their labor, they are contented with their leisure after the working hours. Satisfied with their freedom and dignity, these workers, however, dwell in unhealthy conditions in both their residences and in their workplaces. Fern distinctively depicts the workers' gloomy dwelling in "The Working-Girls of New York," that "The room they occupy is close and unventilated, with no accommodations for personal cleanliness" (FF 220). Their workplace is "a large, black-looking building, where several hundred of them are manufacturing hoop-skirts" (FF 221). They work there "from seven in the morning till six in the evening... with only half an hour at midday to eat their dinner... which they usually eat in the building, some of them having come a long distance... the roar of machinery in that room is like the roar of Niagara" (FF 221). Day in and day out of hard work in an unhealthy environment robs the "look of youth on their faces; hard lines appear there. Their brows are knit; their eyes are sunken" (FF 221). In short, Fern portrays another social scene of "toil, starvation, and friendlessness" to call for the authorities' attention. She is hopeful that besides providing boarding-houses for these working women, there are many more ways to improve their miserable lives provided that
society as a whole truly puts forth its endeavor.

Long hours of work, unlivable wages, and pitiful living conditions often amount to the irresistibility of sinful temptations to uneducated women. In "Whom Does It Concern?," Fern depicts a worn-out woman who falls for a possibility of luxurious and comfortable life. Witnessing a merriment in prostitutes' lives across her window and tired of being a seamstress under a selfish employer, Mary reasons "The world was dark and weary to her... Life was such a rosy dream to them--such a brooding nightmare to her! Despair laid its icy hand on her heart. Must she always drink unmixed, the cup of sorrow?" (FL2, 303). Driven by despair, Mary joins the fallen women and ends her miserable life in sinful shame. It is apparent that Fern blames selfish society as the cause of women's fall. Fern's sympathy for prostitutes is due to her realization of the restraints society puts on the unfortunate.

Believing that social conditions play an important role in human beings' choice of living, Fern vigorously argues for justice and forgiveness toward the sinful, the repentant, and the unfortunate. She insists that if society truly cares for its members' well-being, regardless of sex, class, and race, the world will be more healthy, productive, and peaceful. Although Fern's solutions for the social problems she had witnessed are not systemetically planned and carried out, her humanitarian and religious points of view as well as her earnestness in presenting these problems signify her sincere concerns of all human beings' welfare, particularly of those who, she believes, are plunged into their wretchedness because of society's hypocrisy and indifference:

how often, when their feet have tried to climb the narrow, up-hill path of right, the
eyes that have watched, have watched only for their halting; never noting, as God
notes, the steps that did not slip—never holding out the strong right hand of help
when the devil with a full larder was tugging furiously at their skirts to pull them
backward. ("Blackwell's Island," CS 30)

To Fern, society should shoulder full responsibility for its members' contentment,
sufficiency, and equality by providing care and encouragement for all.
Notes

1 Peter Gregg Slater in Children in the New England Mind: In Death and in Life (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1977) verifies that according to the "Augustino-federal" version of original sin, human "initial guilt stemmed from Adam's transgression in the Garden of Eden. This first man had covenanted with God to serve as the representative of the human race for all time to come. His crime was therefore humanity's crime."

Moreover, to Slater, St. Augustine's argument that "the primal crime had corrupted the very soul of the father of the human race" was of great importance because it meant that "all future men inherited depraved natures," 20-21. For more information on the five essential doctrines of Calvinism summed up from John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536), see C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon's A Handbook to Literature 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1986) 70.

2 James Parton in Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume (New York: 1873) provides evidence of Edward Payson's religious extremes in Payson's letter to his parents in 1808, "I preached last Sabbath on man's depravity, and attempted to show that by nature man is, in stupidity and in sensibility, a block; in sensuality and sottishness, a beast; and in pride, malice, cruelty, and treachery, a Devil. This set the whole town in an uproar, and never was such a racket made about any poor sermon," 19. However, to be fair to the minister, Parton adds that he gathered from those present in the oratory deliverance that Edward Payson delivered his preaching "in sorrow, not in anger. It was not the priest rebuking the sinner, but the tender human being deploving the sad case of his fellow," 19.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

"Be cheerful," says the man who is easy in his circumstances . . . But does he ever consider how hard it may be to be "cheerful" when the heart aches, and the cupboard is empty, and there are little fresh graves in the church-yard, and friends are few or indifferent, and even God, for the time being, seems to have forgotten us . . . How difficult for one man to understand another, in such different circumstances! How easy to say, "Be cheerful!" How hard he would find it to practice it, were he stripped of all life's brightness!

Fanny Fern's "Some City Sights,"

Caper-Sauce (CS), 228.

Rapid and tremendous industrial growth and technological development in mid-nineteenth-century America brought about various changes socially, politically, and culturally. Along with its speedy progress, the country inevitably faced many types of social problems. An influx of immigrants brought with them diversity in culture, language, and religious beliefs. Poor and unhealthy conditions of factory workers, unfair
wages, inequality and injustice toward the poor and women in general aroused and awakened the righteous conscience of writers and social reformers. Physical fights and verbal protests in many forms had occurred as an attempt to bring forth a better society that promoted equal opportunities for all, regardless of sex, class, and race and to force America to deserve recognition as a truly democratic country.

An outstanding, productive, and well-received writer, Fanny fern was aware of many social problems prevalent in her society. Long years of embittered widowhood enabled her to realize the intensity of inequality and unfairness that society renders to the poor, particularly to unprotected women. Although sufficiently educated, a lack of patriarchal protection left women only a few paths: to become domestics, to work in factories, or to be seamstresses, none of which offered fair remuneration or comfortable living conditions. Having sympathy for the unfortunate, Fern vigorously employed her newspaper columns as a platform to voice her opinions for a betterment of their conditions. Through her columns, moreover, Fern provided full support and encouragement to strengthen their will power and to invigorate them to fight for more respectability and a better status. Fern’s belief that a determination to fight and a desire to live one’s life to the utmost will eventually lead to success prevails throughout her writing career.

Realizing the value of education as a means to attain independence financially, Fern calls for equal opportunities for women’s higher education. Repeatedly, she points out disadvantages of women’s being uneducated and at the same time emphasizes a prospect of economic freedom through an acquisition of education. Financial
independence, to Fern, warrants respectability, recognition, and equality in a competitive and materialistic, male-dominated society. Education, in other words, is the first stepping stone to ensure women's success in their fight for equal rights.

Fern's advocacy for equality is not exclusively for women. She earnestly persuades adults to acknowledge children's individuality and to respect their rights as human beings. Having raised a motherless granddaughter, Fern realizes the importance and difficulties of childrearing. She asks parents to personally tend to their children's well-being both at home and in school. Although she values the significance of education, she disagrees with parents' and teachers' "crowding" children's brains. Fern contends that physical and mental discomforts that children receive from school do not enhance their knowledge, but are hazardous to their health. Fern's concern for children includes proper exercises, good manners, and sufficient religious knowledge as well.

Born of and raised by Calvinistic parents, Fern is closely associated with ministers and their preaching. Although Fern has an extremely strong attachment to God, she denounces Calvinistic preaching her parents revere. To her, God is not a tyrant, but a kind, courteous, forgiving, and caring Being. Fern's disgust with all kinds of pretenses and pretentious people results in her unrelenting struggles to promote simplicity. She calls for a simple and humble church decoration. Moreover, she requests preachers to deliver comprehensible and compassionate preaching. She perceives religion as a source of spiritual consolation. An advocate of equality, Fern urges that churches be equally accessible to all and that each and every member receive fair and similar treatment.

A champion of equality for all, Fern earnestly argues for an improvement of the
unfortunate's destitute conditions. Believing that each individual is entitled to an equal right to live healthily and sufficiently, and that society has full responsibility for its members' welfare, Fern calls for assistance from philanthropists and concerned authority to better their situation. Having visited many prisons, Fern expresses her concern for prisoners' physical and mental health. She asks for more light in the prison cells, and child-care centers for young children of female prisoners. Recognizing the importance of human dignity, Fern urges the authority to cease humiliating convicts in fronts of visitors, or to treat them like animals. Moreover, she suggests vocational-training institutions for ex-convicts so that they will be able to get employment and live a normal life after their release.

Orphans, immigrants, servants, and factory-working women all receive Fern's sympathy. Her own bitter sufferings enable her to identify wholeheartedly and understandingly with the poor and the needy. She graphically portrays their destitution to the public with the hope that her depiction will result in their being properly assisted in one way or another. Fern believes that the most unfortunate people as a consequence of society's hard-heartedness and indifference are fallen women. Prejudicial social conditions that limit women's respectable job opportunities as well as men's hypocrisy and double standard, Fern argues, account for women's wrong paths in life. It is only fair that society readily welcome the repentant and offers them a second chance to live righteously.

Fanny Fern's long writing career of both literary and non-literary works proves her to be a prime and vigorous social critic. An incredibly wide range of subject matter
marks her as unconventional and well-advanced for her time. James Parton in *Fanny Fern: A Memorial Volume* certifies Fern's employment of her personal experiences and actual social scenes she witnessed as her materials for writing that "every one of her articles had a basis of fact in the life around her. She never fired her shot at random in the air. Something real invariably suggested the subject" (76). Although Fern's humanitarian solutions for social problems she considers unjust are not systematically planned, her advocacy of such good causes as Women's Rights, women's education, and equal opportunities for all people regardless of sex, class, and race assures her deserved position as a strong, straightforward, and unrelenting social critic.

The severe criticism Fern received from narrow-minded critics does not affect her firm stand to fight for the poor, the needy, and the unfortunate. On the other hand, it invigorates her to convey her messages for their improved conditions more diligently and devotedly, believing as her character Ruth Hall believes that "I can do it, I feel it, I will do it" (*Ruth Hall*, 116). That Fern's fame immediately faded so quickly after her death is not because of sentimental qualities in her works, but because critics, who do not thoroughly study her works, mistakenly include her among the domestic sentimentalists. Besides, practical and sensible solutions to social problems proffered by "a female writer" are not as seriously taken into account as those suggested by canonical male writers. This in part explains her disappearance into oblivion for almost a hundred years.
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