FRANCES DANA GAGE

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By

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FRANCES DANA GAGE.

Among the women whose names were familiar to the people of the North during the middle of the nineteenth century, none was more widely known nor more beloved than Frances Dana Gage. Living in an age when the activities of women were severely restricted, when public opinion scorned and ridiculed any who ventured to engage in any occupation outside of the home, handicapped by the very meager education of frontier Ohio, Frances Dana Gage succeeded in making herself prominent as a lecturer, poet, writer, reformer in the fields of temperance, anti-slavery, women's rights, and in the work of aiding the freedmen during the Civil War. She possessed unusual oratorical and literary gifts, almost boundless interests and enthusiasm, and was an indefatigable worker in any humanitarian and reformatory movement. Withal, she was the mother of a large family, caring for her home and children amid the hardships and toil characteristic of a pioneer community.

I. Early Life

Frances Dana Gage was born in 1808, in Union Township, Washington County, Ohio. Her father, Joseph Barker, of New Hampshire, was a member of that first company of settlers from New England who, under the leadership of Rufus Putnam, had landed at Marietta in 1788. Her mother had been Elizabeth Dana, and her grandmother was Mrs. Mary Bancroft Dana of
the well-known Massachusetts families. ¹

Frances Dana Barker, thus, spent her childhood in a thoroughly pioneer community. Schools were scarce. The only one she ever knew was a log-cabin in the woods, which she attended for only a few years. But other things formed as important a part of her education. Her father was a farmer, and the usual tasks of a farmer's daughter in a new country fell to her lot. She learned to spin the cloth for the clothes they wore, to make butter and cheese, to help when necessary in the outdoor work of the farm. All of these things played a large part in her life and were to furnish a great deal of material for her pen.

Another circumstance, too, had a vital influence in shaping her thoughts and actions. Her grandmother, Mrs. Mary Bancroft Dana, lived in Belpre, Ohio, on the Ohio River, only a mile from Parkersburg, Va. Mrs. Dana was even then a radical on the subject of slavery, and Frances Barker learned to hate the word and all it represented in her frequent visits to her grandmother. Often, too, fugitive slaves found their way to the neighborhood in which the Barker family lived, and always they were given food and a place in which to hide for a night or longer. ²

¹ Coggeshall, William T. *The Poets and Poetry of the West.* p. 393.

² Brockett, L.P. and Vaughan, Mrs. Mary C. *Woman's Work in the Civil War.* p. 683
In 1828 Frances Dana Barker married James L. Gage, a young lawyer of McConnelsville, Ohio, and went to her new home overlooking the Muskingum River, at that place. Mr. Gage was of the same mind as his wife on the subject of slavery. Even at this early date he was boldly speaking against it. Mrs. Gage said of him many years later in a letter to the National Anti-Slavery Standard:

"No better friend of the slave opposed his mental force against the tyrant power that was overshadowing the country. As long ago as when Garrison raised his voice for the oppressed in New England, James L. Gage was speaking bold words in favor of human rights in Ohio. In those days, on the very border of servitude, it required much nerve to be true, and to stand alone. No Anti-Slavery Society gave its support to the isolated Abolitionist, who here or there among the new countries of the Western States stood as it were the picket guard upon the out-post of Freedom."

Raising a family of eight children, taking care of a home and a garden would have kept any ordinary woman busy to the exclusion of everything else. But Mrs. Gage was not an ordinary person. She was too interested in the events of the time, too interested in the welfare of her fellow human beings, too much of the reformer by nature, to be content with the circumscribed life of the average woman of her day. To use fully her own abilities she realized the need of more education. Too she

disliked to be unable to answer the questions her children asked her. So she set about educating herself. Books were scarce, but she read all she could find. She read all the magazines and newspapers available in her home. It was one of her firm convictions that a woman should make use of all the abilities and gifts with which she was endowed. She agreed that it was her first duty to take care of home and children, but that she was not permitted to do anything she chose in her leisure hours and after it was no longer necessary to spend her time in home duties, was to her mind unfair and absurd. Soon Mrs. Gage began to write letters and articles to the newspapers and magazines on topics of interest, usually on some reform measure. Temperance was the subject of many of the early ones. Agricultural magazines, too, often received letters from her. In them she usually discussed what women could do to beautify their homes with flowers, trees and gardens. While she was always ready to write against slavery, it was seldom that she could get anything published in those early days on that topic. In fact a word about it was enough to bar her from the columns of some papers. She has several such experiences. On one occasion the editor of a "State Journal" had engaged her to write weekly for his paper, a thing which seemed a great achievement to her at that time. But a few words from her upon the Fugitive Slave Law brought a note saying her services were no longer wanted. "He would not," the editor wrote, "publish sentiments in his

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4 This incident is related by Brockett and Vaughan, in *Woman's Work in the Civil War*, p. 685.
Journal, which, if carried out, would strike at the foundation of all law, order, and government, and added much good advice. Mrs. Gage's reply to this was prompt.

"Yours of -- is at hand. Thanking you for your unasked counsel, I cheerfully retire from your columns.

Respectfully yours,

F. D. Gage".

After the family moved to St. Louis in 1853, Mrs. Gage had a similar experience with the Missouri Republican. In one of her articles for that paper she summed up the resources of that State, and advanced the opinion that if the people would abolish slavery within ten years Missouri would lead its sister States to the East. The editor, Colonel Chambers, at once received protests from slave-holders for allowing abolitionists to write for his paper. They maintained that such sentiment would destroy the Union. The editor, however, disregarded the protests. "If your Union," he said, "is based upon a foundation so unstable that one woman's breath can blow it down, in God's name let her do it. She shall say her say while I live and edit this paper." 5

But Colonel Chambers died soon after that and Mrs. Gage was at once excluded from the columns of the Missouri Republican. For several years she wrote regularly for the Missouri Democrat, but in 1858 she was excluded from that paper, too, because she had appeared on the platform of the Boston Anti-Slavery Society.

5 Ibid. p. 687.
But in spite of frequent rebuffs she worked on, apparently not discouraged. She did not hesitate to speak boldly when she thought it would do some good, regardless of the risk. She was early branded an "abolitionist", and in Missouri threats were made against her life and property.

In her writing even in the early days in McConnellsville Mrs. Gage was versatile and refreshing. She had her own strong convictions upon her subjects and a gift for graceful expression. The realization that most of her education was gained by her own independent efforts only made the products of her pen and brain more attractive. And above all things she possessed good common sense - an attribute not often found among "reformers".

Mrs. Gage was more closely associated with the Ohio Cultivator, published at Columbus between 1845 and 1862, than with any other periodical. She began writing for it in 1850 and for the following twelve years of its existence she was a regular contributor, and for the last two years, 1861 and 1862, she was editor of the Home Department. Signing her communications "Aunt Fanny" she became extremely popular with the readers of that periodical. Her contributions were always practical, interesting, useful, and adapted to the needs of her readers.

The Western Literary Magazine was another periodical with which she was identified at an early date. Here her articles were often a criticism of some current book or article. In 1851 she wrote criticizing Mrs. C. M. Kirkland's "Western Clearings" which she had just finished reading. She took exception to the description of pioneer life as depicted by
Mrs. Kirkland. This was a subject with which Mrs. Gage was certainly familiar, and she painted a word picture of the life, and hopes, and dreams of the typical pioneer. In the publications of that magazine during that year, 1851, Mrs. Gage contributed three articles and as many poems.

Prior to 1850 there was little opportunity for Mrs. Gage to leave her home. While she found time to write and read, any prolonged absence was impossible. She kept up an increasing amount of correspondence, however, particularly upon the question of Woman's Rights. This was a subject that had already claimed her attention and about which she was writing and speaking. She had even been in correspondence with Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Jane Knight upon that subject. 6

II. Activity in Behalf of Woman's Suffrage,
Temperance and Anti-Slavery, 1850-1862.

As her duties lightened at home and she found more time at her disposal, she widened the stage of her activities. She was able and willing to take an active part in the various reform movements that were being organized during the middle of the nineteenth century, and her name was soon well known in the field of humanitarian reforms.

In April of 1850 the first Woman's Rights Convention in Ohio met at Salem. Unfortunately Mrs. Gage was unable to attend, though she had been asked to make an address. However, 6

she wrote a letter, which was read to the Convention, expressing her sympathy with the movement. Women, she said, did need elevating. "Yet", she continued, "I do not hope much from anything but a remodeling of public opinion. The laws of public opinion are now more oppressive, if possible, than the written laws of the land." Women, she thought were even worse than the men in this respect. Mrs. Gage spoke from personal experience and from that time on was active in the movement to remodel public opinion. But, she said in her letter she did not feel equal to the task of speaking on that subject to a State Convention.

However, she saw that it was an opportune time for activity by the women of the State. The Convention to amend the Constitution of Ohio was in session at that time in Columbus and later in Cincinnati. The Salem Convention had been called with the idea of influencing the provisions to be drawn up concerning woman. The more this subject was agitated the better chance there was of securing more just laws. But Mrs. Gage's notoriety as an abolitionist made it difficult for her to reach people at home. She had to work through the press and social circles. Finding several women in the neighborhood who would join her in this undertaking, a meeting was called in McConnellsville, in May, 1850. Mrs. Gage described this convention several years later.

"In May a county meeting was called in McConnellsville, Morgan County, Ohio. Mrs. H. M. Little, Mrs. M. T. Corner,
Mrs. H. Brewster, and myself, were all the women that I knew in that region, even favorable to a movement for the help of women. Two of these only asked for more just laws for married women. One hesitated about the right of suffrage. I alone in the beginning asked for the ballot, and equality before the law for all adult citizens of sound mind, without regard to sex or color. The Freemasons gave us their hall for our meeting, but no men were admitted. I drew up a memorial for signatures, praying that the words "white" and "male" be omitted in the new Constitution. I also drew up a paper copying the unequal laws on our statute books with regard to women. We met, Mrs. Harriet Brewster presiding. Some seventy ladies of our place fell in through the day. I read my paper, and Mrs. M. T. Corner gave up a historical account of the noted women of the past. It was a new thing. At the close, forty names were placed on the memorial. For years I had been talking and writing and people were used to my "craziness". But who expected Mrs. Corner and others to take such a stand! Of course we were heartily abused.  

Thus Mrs. Gage began her career of speaking and writing on Woman's Rights - a career that lasted until her death in 1884.

The meeting at McConnellsville was followed shortly after by another county meeting at Chesterfield, also in Morgan County. This was the occasion of Mrs. Gage’s famous "ox-sled" speech.

The meeting was advertised to be held in the M. E. Church, but when the women arrived they were denied the use of the church, and had to resort to a near-by barn. There some three or four hundred farmers with their families had assembled when Mrs. Gage arrived. She, Mrs. Little, Mrs. Corner and Mrs. Brewster had "hired a hack" and ridden sixteen miles over the hill before 10 A. M. Mrs. Gage had enlarged her argument and spoke with great warmth and enthusiasm, standing on an ox-cart, which, one of her hearers told her, must have inspired her.9

The close of the year 1850 found Mrs. Gage in Columbus, a delegate to the Teachers' Convention being held there. As usual she was vitally interested in everything to be heard and seen, from the proceedings of the Convention to the "concert of the blind and the ball of the lunatics".10 But she was not in good health and the activities of this occasion must have been too strenuous for her. She was forced to remain in Columbus for three weeks, dangerously ill, and it was April before she had fully recovered.11

In May, 1851 the second State Woman's Rights Convention was held in Akron, Ohio. Mrs. Gage was a delegate to the Convention and was elected the President, a position which she held with dignity and ability. Upon taking the chair Mrs. Gage delivered an address that attracted much attention, and

9 Ibid. p. 122.
10 Ohio Cultivator, Jan. 1, 1851.
11 Ibid. April 1, 1851.
was favorably commented upon. She said, in part:  

I am at a loss, kind friends, to know whether to return you thanks, or not, for the honor conferred upon me. And when I tell you that I have never in my life attended a regular business meeting, and am entirely inexperienced in the forms and ceremonies of a deliberative body, you will not be surprised that I do not feel remarkably grateful for the position. For though you have conferred an honor upon me, I very much fear that I shall not be able to reflect it back. I will try.

When our forefathers left the old and beaten paths of New England and struck out for themselves in a new and unexplored country, they went forth with a slow and cautious step, but with firm and resolute hearts. The lands of their fathers had become too small for their children. Its soil answered not their wants. The parents shook their heads and said, with doubtful and forbidding faces: 'Stand still, stay at home. This has sufficed for us; we have lived and enjoyed ourselves here. True, our mountains are high, and our soil is rugged and cold, but you won't find a better; change and trial and toil will meet you at every step. Stay, tarry with us, and go not forth to the wilderness.' But the children answered: 'Let us go; this land has sufficed for you, but the one beyond the mountains is better. We know there is trial, toil, and danger; but for the sake of our children, and our children's children, we are willing to meet all.' They went forth, and pitched their tents in the wilder-

ness. An herculean task was before them; the rich and fertile soil was shadowed by a mighty forest, and giant trees were to be felled. The Indians roamed the wild, wide hunting grounds, and claimed them as their own. They must be met and subdued. The savage beasts howled defiance from every hill-top and from every glen. They must be destroyed. Did the hearts of our fathers fail? No; they entered upon their new world with a strong faith and a mighty will. For they saw in the prospective a great and incalculable good.

It was not the work of an hour, nor of a day; not of weeks or months, but of long, struggling, toiling, painful years. If they failed at one point they took hold at another. If their paths through the wilderness were at first crooked, rough and dangerous, by little and little they improved them. The forests faded away, the savages disappeared, the wild beasts were destroyed, and the hopes and prophetic visions of their far-seeing powers in the new and untried country, were more than realized.

Permit me to draw a comparison between the situation of our forefathers in the wilderness, without even so much as a bridle-path through its dark depths, and our present position. The old land of moral, social, and political privilege seems too narrow for our wants; its soil answers not to our growing, and we feel that we see clearly a better country that we might inhabit. But there are mountains of established law and custom to overcome, a wilderness of prejudice to be subdued; a powerful foe of selfishness, and self-interest to overthrow; wild beasts of pride,
envy, malice, and hate, to destroy. But for the sake of our children and our children's children, we have entered upon the work, hoping and praying, that we may be guided by wisdom, sustained by love, and led and cheered by the earnest hope of doing good.

I shall enter into no labored argument to prove that woman does not occupy the position in society to which her capacity justly entitles her. The rights of mankind emanate from their natural wants and emotions. Are not the natural wants and emotions of humanity common to, and shared equally by, both sexes? Does man hunger and thirst, suffer cold and heat more than woman? ......

Do not answer that woman's position is now all her natural wants and emotions require. Our meeting here together this day proves the contrary, proves that we have aspirations that are not met. Will it be answered that we are factious, discontented spirits, striving to disturb the public order, and tear up the old fastnesses of society? So it was said of Jesus Christ and His followers, when they taught peace on earth and good-will to men. So it was said of our forefathers in the great struggle for freedom. So it has been said of every reformer in the great struggle for freedom. So it has been said of every reformer that has ever started out the car of progress on a new and untried track.....

Oh! if all women could be impressed with the importance of their own action, and with one united voice, speak out in
their own behalf, in behalf of humanity, they could create a re-
volution without armies, without bloodshed, that would do more
to ameliorate the condition of mankind, to purify, elevate, enable
humanity than all that has been done by reformers in the last
century."

It was at this Convention that Sojourner Truth appeared
and struck terror into the hearts of the leaders of the new
movement. They feared that it would be branded "an Abolition
affair", "Woman's rights and niggers!" Sojourner Truth attended
every session, quiet and watchful. Mrs. Gage in her "Reminiscences"
of this Convention\(^\text{13}\) said that "again and again, timorous and
trembling ones came to me and said with earnestness, "Don't let
her speak, Mrs. Gage, it will ruin us. Every newspaper in the
land will have our cause mixed up with abolition and niggers,
and we shall be utterly denounced." My only answer was, "We
shall see". All of the women there were inexperienced in pub-
lic speaking and discussion, and the subject of woman's rights
was new to most of them. So they were absolutely unable to cope
with the arguments presented by the men who attended the meetings

\(^{13}\) Hauser, Elizabeth J. *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Ohio*,
in *The Ohio Magazine*, Feb., 1905. Sojourner Truth was once
a slave in the State of New York, and carried many scars
received during that time. She was a woman of rare intel-
ligence and common sense, though she could neither read nor
write. She spoke very often in anti-slavery and woman's
rights meetings.
and who were determined to put a stop to the whole movement. Women, who a few years later were ready and willing to answer any objection were silent. Sojourner Truth wanted to speak and Mrs. Gage allowed her to do so. She answered every argument put forth by the objectors. Those who had begged Mrs. Gage not to let her speak were as pleased as any when she did.

In June Mrs. Gage went to Chicago to attend an Anti-Slavery Convention held there. In a letter to the Cleveland True Democrat she wrote that she was pleased with the tone and spirit of the meeting, but that she was disappointed in the response of the Chicago people who had such a great name as advocates of Anti-Slavery. She said from the appearance of the Convention Chicago people did not know there was one! Such indifference to any good cause was incomprehensible to Mrs. Gage. She was willing to overcome almost any obstacle to further a cause which she had espoused. Often, too, Mrs. Gage found herself in odd situations which called for all her ingenuity and sense of humor. One such occasion was "John's Convention" the call for which, signed by "John Brewster", appeared in a local newspaper. It was to be held in December, 1851, at Mount Gilead, Ohio, and the call announced that many celebrities would be on hand. Mrs. Gage wrote that she would be there, little knowing what was before her. She tells the story of this "Convention" herself:


"It was two days' journey by steamboat and rail. The call was signed "John Andrews", and John Andrews promised to meet me at the cars. I went. It was fearfully cold, and John met me. He was a beardless boy of nineteen, looking much younger. We drove to the "Christian Church". On the way he cheered me by saying that he was afraid nobody would come, for all the people said nobody would come for his asking. When we got to the house, there was not a human soul on hand, no fires in the old rusty stove, and the wide, unpainted board benches, all topsy-turvy. I called some boys playing near, asked their names, put them on paper, five of them, and said to them, 'Go to every house in this town and tell everybody that "Aunt Fanny" will speak here at 11 A. M., and if you get me fifty to come and hear, I will give you each ten cents.' They scattered off upon the run. I ordered John to right the benches, picked up chips, and kindlings, borrowed a brand of fire at the next door, had a good hot stove, and the floor swept, and was ready for my audience at the appointed time. John had done his work well, and fifty at least were on hand, and a minister to make a prayer and quote St. Paul before I said a word. I said my say, and before 1 P. M., we adjourned, appointing another session at 3, and one at 7 P. M., and three for the following day. Mrs. O. M. Severance came at 6 P. M., and we had a good meeting throughout. John's Convention was voted a success after all". John, Mrs. Gage added, died young, worn out by his own enthusiasm and conflicts.

The great excitement concerning the Temperance movement
which swept the country in the winter of 1852-53 was especially pleasing to Mrs. Gage. Having written for years on this subject she was happy to see the country so aroused, and did her best to help the cause along. In September, 1852 she went to New York to the World's Temperance Convention there. That Convention was one which Mrs. Gage was not likely to forget. The abuse and ridicule hurled at Antoinette Brown when she endeavored to speak, the angry discussion by the gentlemen of the Convention, many of them clergymen, to whom the idea of a woman daring to speak in public was extremely repugnant, and finally the refusal to accept the credentials of the women delegates, were events that stamped themselves indelibly upon the mind of any person present. The fact that Mrs. Gage was boarding with Antoinette Brown while in New York only made the impression deeper. The women thus excluded formed a convention of their own, and Mrs. Gage was elected a vice president of that body. 16

During the following year sentiment had changed, so much so that at the World's Temperance Convention in September, 1853, also in New York, Mrs. Gage herself was one of the speakers. She spoke briefly about the workings of the rum traffic in the South, and of the general lack of effort there in favor of reform. She said that except with the women the Maine Law was very generally opposed. 17 A Temperance banquet was held on the fifth of September at which Mr. Horace Greeley and Mrs. Gage

16 Ibid. p. 119
were appointed presiding officers. Mrs. Gage spoke a few words appropriate to the occasion. At one of the evening sessions Mrs. Gage had the pleasure of having one of her songs, "Ben Fisher" sung.

The New York Tribune in commenting on this Temperance Convention said:

"This has been the most spirited and able convention on behalf of temperance that was ever held. It has already done good, and cannot fail to do more. The scarcity of white neckties on the platform so fully atoned for by the presence of such champions of reform and humanity as Antoinette L. Brown, Lucy Stone, Mrs. Jackson, of England, Mrs. C. I. H. Nichols, Mrs. Frances Dana Gage, etc, that like the absence of wine from our festive boards when it is graced by women, it was the theme of no general or very pointed regret."

In Ohio the enthusiasm of that winter, 1852-53, had led to the formation of the Woman's Temperance Society. State Temperance Conventions had been held annually for several years before, but this was the first attempt to organize the women. The Society was formed in Columbus, and sent out papers giving their by-laws and resolutions, and calling for auxiliary societies in different parts of the State. The call in many places met with hearty response.\textsuperscript{19} In September, 1853 the Ohio State Women's Temperance Society held its second Convention in Dayton. Mrs. Gage had

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{18} Daily Herald. Cleveland, Ohio. Sept. 7, 1853}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{19} Stanton, Anthony, Gage. History of Woman's Suffrage. Vol 1, p 119}
been advertised as one of the speakers. She traveled two hundred miles, to reach the hall only just in time. In the course of the meeting two original poems were read, one by Mrs. Gage and one by Mrs. Hodge, of Oberlin.\textsuperscript{20} The speeches, three in number, the Dayton Evening Post said "would not have dishonored any of our public orators if we consider the matter, style, or manner of delivery."

In 1853 Mrs. Gage and her family moved from McConnellsville to St. Louis. Due to this Mrs. Gage was unable to fill her place in the chair at the Woman's Rights Convention held at Ravenna, May 25, 1853. But her pen was active and a letter from her was read to the assembly.\textsuperscript{21}

Desiring to take advantage of the crowds that would be in New York for the Temperance Convention, a Woman's Rights Convention had been called to meet in that city during the same week of September, 1853. Mrs. Gage was one of the prominent speakers there. Her speeches were usually short, but she always had something vital and interesting to say and could say it in an impressive and spirited way. During the course of her address at this Convention she read a will altered by putting the name of the wife in place of that of the husband, and demanded if the audience were willing that married women should have a right to make such a will.\textsuperscript{22} Her intention was of course

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. p 120
\textsuperscript{21} Daily Herald. Cleveland, Ohio. May 28, 1853
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. Sept. 6, 1853
to point out that the law forbade married women to bequeath property.

October 6th, 7th, and 8th, the Fourth National Woman's Rights Convention met in Cleveland, Ohio. Lucretia Mott called the meeting to order and announced that it had been decided in a preliminary gathering the evening before, that Frances Dana Gage, of St. Louis, was the suitable person to fill the office of President on this occasion. Mrs. Gage, being duly elected, took the chair and at once asked Rev. Antoinette Brown to offer a prayer. After which Mrs. Gage said to the thousand people assembled: "I would remark once for all, to the Convention, that there is perfect liberty given here to speak upon the subject under discussion, both for and against, and that we urge all to do so. If there are any who have objections, we wish to hear them. If arguments are presented which convince us that we are doing wrong, we wish to act upon them."23 Speaking of Mrs. Gage at this time the Cleveland Plain Dealer said,—"Mrs. Gage is not a handsome woman, but her appearance altogether is prepossessing. You can see genius in her eye."

From this meeting in Cleveland Mrs. Gage went to a convention of the Indiana Woman's Rights Association, in Richmond, where she had been engaged as one of the speakers. For the following five or six years Mrs. Gage was invited to speak at the annual Conventions in Indiana, and very rarely did she miss a meeting.

23 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. History of Woman's Suffrage. p 127
That year, 1853, had indeed been a busy one for Mrs. Gage. She had moved her family and established a new home in St. Louis, had rarely missed writing an article for the bi-monthly issues of the Ohio Cultivator, had written numerous letters to newspapers, and had attended the above mentioned conventions in some active capacity. In that year Mrs. Paulina Wright Davis began the publication of her Woman's Rights paper, The Una, at Providence, Rhode Island, and Mrs. Gage became one of the correspondents for it. \(^{24}\) She was to become increasingly active in the years following this. She became much in demand as a lecturer and speaker at Conventions. Whenever possible she responded to any call to help in the cause of reform. 1854 saw her on the lecture platform for many months and in many places. As a lecturer Mrs. Gage was always cordially received. Mrs. Cutler, writing to the Ohio Cultivator\(^ {25}\) says of Mrs. Gage at this time:

"Mrs. Gage, even at her period of life, is growing grandly in intellectuality. She had not the early advantages of culture that give ease and facility of expression, almost without thought, but she possesses those interior springs of thought and feeling, that far surpass in effect the affluence of mere expression, that belongs only to the scholar. Some of her auditors, who listened to her address upon "Woman and Her Needs", thought she surpassed even Miss Stone. Those gushes of poetic feeling,

\(^{24}\) Ibid. p 246

\(^{25}\) Nov. 5, 1854
sparkling with wit and humor, seemed like bursts of sunshine upon the mountain tops, as they fell from her lips." At conventions her speeches always delighted her audiences — full of wit and pathos they offset the long arguments of others and were highly appreciated by those on the platform. 26

By 1854 the work in behalf of Woman's Equal Rights in New York was thoroughly organized under Susan B. Anthony as General Agent. It was her place to canvass the state systematically, to arouse the women and secure as many signatures as possible to petitions with which to bombard the State Legislature. To do this a number of able lecturers were secured. Mrs. Gage was one of this number, and for months she traveled through western New York, lecturing every day and securing the desired signatures. Often, in the time she spent in New York, she visited at the beautiful home of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, where she was always most welcome. 27

In spite of the time spent in New York during that year, Mrs. Gage gave two series of lectures in Illinois on "The Elevation of Woman" and "Temperance". One series was given in February and the other in December. In several places in southern Illinois she met with some opposition, but on the whole she lectured with "good success". 28

In 1854 the first effort to arouse interest in Woman's

26 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. p 168
27 Ibid. p 460
28 Ohio Cultivator. 1854
Rights in Iowa was made. Mrs. Gage was invited to give a series of lectures, which she did in May through the southeastern part of the State. Crowded houses greeted her everywhere, due in part to the novel sight of a woman on the platform.

In October of 1854, Mrs. Gage traveled to Philadelphia to organize the Fifth National Convention of the Woman’s Rights Association. Having been president of the preceding one it was her duty to call this one to order and read the call for the convention. At the elections this year she was made a vice-president, a position to which she was reelected annually until the outbreak of the Civil War. It was on her motion that the Convention decided to hold its next meeting in Cincinnati, at which time she again addressed the assembly.

While extremely active in other States, particularly in Ohio and New York, Mrs. Gage was not able to accomplish much for the woman’s movement in Missouri. Her position there was dangerous; the people, even the immediate neighbors were unfriendly, so much so that even after two years the members of the Gage family were comparative strangers—Abolitionists in a pro-slavery community. Mrs. Gage dared not take the platform to agitate a new reform. In 1855 the Gage family moved from St. Louis to a home two miles from the city. This home overlooked the Mississippi River, was large and comfortable, with enough ground for garden, orchard and chickens.  

29 Ohio Cultivator. June 15, 1855
things to which they had always been accustomed, so it was much pleasanter for the whole family than living in the city.

The scenes of her activities for the years 1855 and 1856 were the same as in the preceding years, except that in 1855 Mrs. Gage addressed the territorial legislature of Nebraska on the subject of woman’s position and wrongs. She spent over a month in New York by invitation, speaking on Woman’s Health, Education and Employment, and kindred subjects. Again, too, she spoke in Illinois on the same topics. But she was unable to return to New York in the fall to attend the Seventh National Woman’s Rights Convention. She took her usual way to express her sentiments and the following letter was read to the Convention.  

St. Louis, November 19, 1856.

Dear Lucy Stone:- Most earnestly did I desire to attend this Seventh National Convention, more especially as I felt that I should be the only representative from the west side of the great Father of Waters. But it is impossible for me to remove the barriers just now opposed to so long a journey and absence from home. There is much thought in the free States of the great West — much less of conservatism and rigid adherence to the old-time customs of law and theology among the masses, than in the East. Thousands are becoming ready to be baptized into a new faith, a broader and holier recognition of the rights of

30 Ibid. May, 1857
31 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. p 656
humanity. The harvest-fields are ripening for the reapers.

The Gloomy night is breaking -
E'en now the sunbeams rest
With a bright and cheery radiance
On the hill-tops of the West;
The mists are slowly rising
From the valley and the plain,
And a spirit is awaking
That shall never sleep again.

But since I can not meet you in your councils, I will endeavor to allay the disappointment by striving to reach with my pen some of the sunset homes in the far West, and endeavor to arouse woman there to her duties and responsibilities, that she may sympathize more fully with her Eastern sisters, who caught the first glow of the sunrise hour of our great reform movement. With sincere and earnest wishes for your advancement in right and truth,

I am respectfully yours,

Frances D. Gage.

What Mrs. Gage had lacked the opportunity to do in Missouri had been begun by Mrs. G. I. H. Nichols. She had visited Missouri and attempted to arouse interest there in the Woman's movement.\(^{32}\) Not much progress was made, however, but Mrs. Gage did what she could to the feeble sprout.

The financial storm of 1857 destroyed Mr. Gage's business.

\(^{32}\) Ibid. p 198
They lost their home on the Mississippi to which Mrs. Gage had become very much attached, and moved to a small house in Carbondale, Ill. Their children could not go with them. They had to go where they could earn a living. It was a severe blow to Mrs. Gage, but she was not a person to allow misfortune to overcome her. "When the home I loved," she wrote, "the trees I had planted, and the flowers I had trained were lost to me - when the children went forth on life's great thoroughfares, and my "house was left unto me desolate" -- I said, what shall I do? Shall I who am yet strong, I who have worked for ten, be content to work for only one or two? Shall I grow old in the chimney corner, weaving only the thread that others spin?" Not she! She was perfectly capable of earning her own living, and she set out to do so. What she had been doing to further the progress of reform she could certainly do to help support herself. So she began to lecture and to write with an added incentive.

In February, 1859, Mrs. Gage left on a trip to the West Indies. Her husband's brother and some friends were going and had asked her to accompany them. Writing of this proposed trip to the Ohio Cultivator, she says: "Don't think Aunt Fanny has gone crazy, because she has gone away to the "Isles of the Sea," nor that she has turned traitor to her native land, and is about to join the Filibusters. But a company of

34 February, 1859.
friends invited me to so; husband said go, - and children said go, - and neighbors said go, - and so I am on the eve of embarkation to the Islands of Cuba, Jamaica, and St. Domingo. Mrs. Gage was gone four months, returning the last day of May, 1859. Those four months were to be used to good advantage indeed, in the following years. The results of her observations she arranged into a series of popular lectures. The West Indies were a subject of great interest in the United States at the time, and one about which the average person knew very little. So it was a comparatively easy matter for Mrs. Gage to secure satisfactory audiences for her lectures on this topic.

The talent, energy and resources of the National Woman's Rights Association which had been concentrated in New York State during 1857 and the early part of 1858, Susan B. Anthony determined to turn into Ohio in 1858-1859. The Ninth National Convention was held in New York in May, 1858, and Miss Anthony reported the success of the work in New York since the last convention. 35 "... The entire expense of the New York State work during the past year is four thousand dollars. The present year we propose to expend our funds and efforts mostly in Ohio, to obtain, if possible for the women of that State, the liberal laws we have secured for ourselves. Ohio, too, is to revise her constitution, and we trust she will not be far behind New York in recognizing the full equality of woman", her report ended. 36

35 No convention had been held in 1857.
36 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. pp 691-693.
Already the work in Ohio had been systematized and was being prosecuted as vigorously as possible under the leadership of J. Elizabeth Jones, the General Agent. Now with the help of the National Association progress could be made more rapidly. The same procedure that had been used successfully in New York was followed in Ohio. Mrs. Gage had many lecture engagements in Ohio in the following years and so did not accept an official position as she had in New York. But she helped the cause a great deal. In her report of May 16, 1861, J. Elizabeth Jones says of Mrs. Gage:37

"Mrs. Frances D. Gage, of Ohio, deeply interested herself in the beginning, and has never failed in faithful testimony and timely word, to promote its success. Although not identified with us as an agent, yet we had her active co-operation during the campaign. Her editorial connection with the press and her lectures on the West India Islands gave her abundant opportunity, which she did not fail to embrace, of circulating petitions and advocating the cause to which she has so largely given her energies."

Through the efforts of the women who canvassed the State, the Legislature was petitioned from year to year for some change in the laws concerning the legal and political status of women. Finally, in 1861, so numerous were the petitions, and so largely did they represent the best constituency of the State, that committees of the Ohio Legislature felt that they

37 Ibid. p 168.
were entitled to a candid hearing. Several of the women prominent in the movement in Ohio were invited to defend their cause before the joint committees of the Legislature, such members of the Legislature and any of the public as might wish to come. The scene was a memorable one, and many glowing descriptions were sent out to the various papers. The following is one of them:

"The Senate chamber was filled to overflowing to hear Mrs. Jones, Cutler, and Gage, and hundreds went away for want of a place to stand. Columbus has seldom seen so refined and intelligent an audience as that which gathered round those earnest women, who had none of the charm of youth or beauty to challenge admiration, but whose heads were already sprinkled with the frost of life's winter. Earnest, truthful, womanly, richly cultivated by the experience of practical life, those women, mothers, and two of them grandmothers, pleaded for the right of woman to the fruits of her own genius, labor, or skill, and for the mother her right to be joint guardian of her own offspring. I wish I could give you the faintest idea of the brilliancy of the scene, or the splendor of the triumph achieved over the legions of prejudice, the cohorts of injustice, and the old national guard of heavy conservatism. If the triumphs of a prima donna is something to boast, what was the triumph of these toil-worn women, when not only the members of the Committee, but Senators and Members of the House, crowded

38 Mrs. Gage was one of the grandmothers.
around them with congratulations and assurances that their able
and earnest arguments had fully prevailed, and the prayer of
their petitioners must be granted.39

Mrs. Gage herself did not speak long. The other two
ladies, Mrs. Cutler, and Mrs. Jones, had spoken for nearly two
hours and a quarter, the hour was getting late, and many had
been standing all the time, so Mrs. Gage declined to make an
address, as she said she thought it would be inhuman to ask the
people to stand longer. She made a few closing remarks, ap-
pealing to Ohio to set her own precedents, and give to her
married daughters the right to their own hands, and an equal
right with the fathers to control and guardianship of children.40

As a result of the long campaign, the Ohio Legislature
did pass a Woman's Rights Bill in April, 1861. Mrs. Gage felt
that "though not all its advocates could have desired, it is
still a great gain, and should give heart and hope to the women
of Ohio, and certainly inspire them with an earnest zeal in all
good works. The giving to married women control of real estate,
even for three years time, and right to all rents and profits,
and also the absolute control of all personal property, whether
acquired or inherited, and of the wages of her own labor, are
powers and privileges that will soon show to our married women,
how unjust is the restriction that forbids their doing business
in their own name, unless burdened with drunken or imbecile

39 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. p 170
40 Field Notes. Jan. 31, 1861
Mrs. Gage would not consent to act as an agent for the Woman's Rights Association undoubtedly because she wanted to be free to secure her own contracts for lectures. She intended to spend her time on the lecture platform anyway, and she felt she could do almost, if not quite, as much good by talking woman's rights and distributing tracts in places where she went, as she could by actually going as an agent of the Association. In fact she could reach people who would not go to hear the representative of the Woman's Rights Association. Mrs. Gage was invariably well received wherever she went, particularly so when she lectured on the West Indies. The Cleveland Herald was enthusiastic in its praises of these lectures. April 3, 1861 commenting on this subject the Cleveland Herald said.

"The people of Hiram have just had an opportunity of attending a course of lectures delivered here by Mrs. Frances D. Gage. As she intends to spend some time on the Reserve lecturing, it seems proper that her efforts should be noticed, both in justice to herself and to the people among whom she is going. Mrs. Gage is no ordinary woman. She has struggled with no common difficulties: she has surmounted them with no common resolution. In the spring of 1859 she visited the West Indies, and the results of her study and observation she has woven into a course of lectures of singular interest. Mrs. Gage professes no faith in the aristocracy of any country. She grounds her

41 Ibid. April 12, 1861.
hope of the race in the masses, and when she studied the character of the people among whom she traveled, she carried her theory into practice. She returns, acquainted, not with the wealthy and noble, but with the habits and customs of the common people.

Mrs. Gage visited also the Danish West Indies and San Domingo. At the present moment, when Spain is attempting to seize the latter island, her lecture upon San Domingo is of peculiar interest.

Mrs. Gage possesses fine descriptive powers. Her description of the harbor and city of Havana, at night — (one of the finest descriptions I have ever heard) — shows the whole sight as clear and well-defined as the stars of the tropics that looked down upon the scene. Not only has she descriptive powers, but she is eloquent. As she spoke of the insurrection in Santa Cruz; as she walked about the walls of old "Blue Beard's" castle; as she conducted us through the old ruins of San Domingo, and the house of Columbus, now more than three centuries old, she completely carried off the whole audience.

Mrs. Gage is a noble woman, engaged in a noble work, and she should have a generous support."

In order to make the lectures profitable to herself, Mrs. Gage would either lecture in Lyceum courses, for a stated compensation, and in accessible places, or on special invitation, she would go and depend upon a small admission fee for compen-
sation. Many times, too, she would secure a suitable room, such as a hall, school-room, or church, pay the necessary expense where expense was unavoidable, and take up an admission fee of ten cents, running the chance herself of realizing a small sum from the affair. 42

During the years 1860 and 1861 Mrs. Gage lectured throughout Ohio and neighboring States. In 1861 she became the Editor of the Home Department of the Ohio Cultivator. Her husband had become ill and their support depended almost entirely upon her efforts. They moved to Columbus, where they lived during the time she was on the staff of the Ohio Cultivator, and, she said, "if we can, by the labor of our hands and brain, answer the needs of our perishing bodies for the few remaining years of our three score and ten, we shall make it our final city of refuge." 43

Her body was not perishing, however that of her husband might be, and Columbus was not to be their final home. For these two years her duties to the Cultivator and her husband prohibited prolonged absences for lecturing. Most of it was necessarily done in Ohio then.

In January, 1861, the editor of the Ohio Cultivator, Mr. S. D. Harris, began publishing "Field Notes," a weekly newspaper for rural sections. The staff of the Ohio Cultivator edited the new paper, so Mrs. Gage took charge of the Home Department. Much of the time she was not in the office of these

42 Ibid. Dec. 7, 1861
43 Ibid. March 16, 1861
publications at all, but sent communications in the shape of articles and letters. Her page was always well and interestingly filled, and much appreciated. Her journeys from place to place through Ohio during these years were made pleasant for her because of her long connection with the *Cultivator*. Seldom did she stop at a hotel or inn. Always in the rural districts friends who felt acquainted with her through the *Cultivator* invited her to spend the night in their home. Mrs. Gage, observant always, made these visits serve a double purpose. She enjoyed the opportunity for a pleasant visit and saved expense, while it provided her with material for her department. She would be shown over the farm where there was one, and she wrote about it in her page. No doubt this pleased her hostesses and hosts — but especially it gave to the Home Department the intimate, personal tone which had always been its chief characteristic and which she would have found difficult to continue while away so much.

In common with most sensible people of that time, Mrs. Gage protested against the way women dressed, with their street-sweeping skirts and health-destroying waists. But she did not adopt nor advocate the Bloomer costume, then causing so much excitement and ridicule. Whole-hearted as she was in the Woman's Movement, this off-shoot from it never had her approval. However, she did think some change was desirable, at least in the dresses in which women worked. She wrote in glowing terms of two young women she met on a trip in Illinois.
They had come from cities in the East, and faced the necessity of accommodating themselves to farm life in Illinois. Finding they must do something to enable them to keep up their end of the work, they "off with their long dresses and swinging hoops, which in a windy day made labor enough for a woman if she has nothing else to do, and robed themselves in blue and white checked garments, their frocks and dresses made with a neat fitting yoke at the neck, and a skirt hanging loose to be banded down by a belt or apron. These skirts cleared the floor by ten inches, their shoes and stockings just what was needed, their hair confined in pretty nets.... In the parlor or at church, they are at home in long skirts, in the kitchen equally so in the reform dress." They illustrated perfectly Mrs. Gage's own attitude. Always urging her readers to study physiology, a subject then being introduced by lecturers to women, she believed in a common sense dress, particularly for the women and girls who must perform the arduous tasks of the farmer's wife and daughter.

The outbreak of the Civil War marked a milestone in Mrs. Gage's career. Her contract with the Ohio Cultivator prevented her from going at once in response to the call for help for the soldiers, which was what she would have liked to have done. She contented herself with doing what she could with tongue and pen. She missed no opportunity to urge women to do their part; she explained what they could do; she told of those who were

44 Ibid. Jan. 24, 1861
doing things. She lectured for soldier's aid societies at various places. Four of her sons enlisted in the army, the youngest in July, 1861.

III. Work among Freedmen and Soldiers

During the Civil War.

In August, 1861, the war had so decreased the circulation of the Ohio Cultivator that it was forced either to suspend publication entirely or merge with the Ohio Farmer, published in Cleveland. Mr. Harris decided to take the latter course, at least until after the State Fair of that year. This action released Mrs. Gage from her contract and set her free to follow her own inclinations. She bent her energies at once to the task of securing aid for the soldiers. Then, when the negroes began to seek refuge within the Union lines, Mrs. Gage's sympathy went out to them. She had been in close contact with slavery, had helped many a fugitive to escape across Ohio, and knew how much in need of help they were. She determined to go to the South and help them.

On Wednesday, October 8, 1862, she sailed from New York to Hilton Head, South Carolina. She intended to go to Port Royal, teach the negroes, and acquaint herself with their condition

and needs.  \textsuperscript{46} She went without appointment and without salary, impelled only by her knowledge of the negroes' want and her sympathy with them in their plight. \textsuperscript{47} She found much to do and set about doing it with a good will. In December, 1862, she wrote to the \textbf{Independent} an account of the mustering in to the army of the First Division of South Carolina Volunteers.

Early in 1863 the Freedmen's Bureau was organized and the work of caring for refugees and freedmen at Port Royal was thoroughly systematized. The several islands on the coast of South Carolina were erected into plantations and farms, efforts were made to teach the freedmen the duties and responsibilities now theirs as free persons, and the necessity of showing themselves capable of self-support. Many associations to help the freedmen were formed in the North, and they sent down teachers and clothing for the negroes. Little Paris Island, South Carolina, was erected into a plantation of itself, and when General Saxton was made general superintendent of the whole section, he appointed Mrs. Gage General Superintendent of the Fourth District. \textsuperscript{48} The Fourth District was Paris Island, a refuge for some five hundred freedmen, almost unbelievably isolated. Mrs. Gage said that months went by without a single white woman coming to the Island. \textsuperscript{49} There were but three white people con-

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\textsuperscript{46} \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, Oct. 11, 1862  \\
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Brockett and Vaughan, Woman's Work in the Civil War}, p 689  \\
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Pierce, Edward L. The Freedmen of Port Royal}, p 317  \\
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{National Anti-Slavery Standard}, Sept. 5, 1863
\end{flushright}
stituting the whole force on the Island. One of these was Mrs. Gage's daughter, Mary E. Gage, who had gone to Paris Island in April to teach.50

In May, 1863, however, Paris Island had visitors. General Saxton's wife took a party for a sightseeing tour to the Island. A letter to the *Anti-Slavery Standard* describes what was seen there.51

"Mrs. General Saxton arranged a pleasant party for a sail on the little steamer Flora to Paris Island, the home of the well-known authoress, and most gifted and excellent woman, Mrs. Frances D. Gage. The Mansion (it would have been called a large old farm house at the North) which she occupied commands a magnificent view of the shipping at Hilton Head. ...

To give form and shape to the reception, Mrs. Gage had grouped the faithful blacks under a large oak tree, a short distance from the house, placing the little picaninnies in front, the young negroes directly behind, reserving the old plantation slaves and field-hands as a bold but dark background to the picture."

In June, 1863, Mrs. Gage was summoned home because of the serious illness of her husband. On the 15th of that month, before his wife could get to him, Mr. Gage died.52

Numerous requests came to Mrs. Gage to lecture on the

condition of the freedmen, so she remained in the North until the end of July. She made a lecture tour through New England and Pennsylvania. Instead of asking pay for her own use, Mrs. Gage asked all who were willing, to assist her to establish a small store of goods upon Paris Island, so that she could have the opportunity to supervise the purchasing by the negroes under her charge. She felt that in that way she could teach them how to spend money and in the end she would realize enough to reimburse her for her lectures. Several places where she lectured gave her money to maintain the teacher at Paris Island.

In the fall of 1863, after having spent thirteen months in South Carolina, Mrs. Gage left her work there and returned North. She planned to devote the autumn and winter to lecturing on behalf of the freedmen. She felt she could do more for them in that way than in any other. November 7th, 1863, the National Anti-Slavery Standard announced that she was ready to begin her work as a lecturer. "Her usual topic," it said, "will be 'Home Life among the Freedmen', and we assure the lecture managers that from the stores of her experience and observation she will present matter of deep interest and importance. As a speaker she is one of the very best of her sex."

The object of her lectures, the thing she wanted to implant into the minds of the people of the North, was the character and condition of the freedmen as they really were. She wanted to show how, in spite of two hundred years in a barbarous, demoralizing condition, the negro had retained so much
goodness, patient hope, unwavering faith in God, and intense desire for knowledge and a surprising capability of self-support. She wanted to show the intensely human character of the slave, and its present helpless dependence upon the people of the North. She believed that by removing prejudice, and inspiring confidence in the Emancipation Proclamation, and by striving to unite the people on this great issue, she could do more than in any other way toward ending the war, and relieving the soldiers. As usual Mrs. Gage met with large audiences. The people were intensely interested in the freedmen and there were very few who had had the experience with them to satisfy the curiosity in the North. The Syracuse Journal of November 20th, said of the lecture when Mrs. Gage was there: "The lecture of Mrs. Frances D. Gage, at the Unitarian Church last evening, on the Character, Condition and Claims of the Freed People of the South, was all that the friends of the cause she advocates could have wished it to be. The house was filled and the audience listened with unabated attention to Mrs. Gage for an hour and a half. She exhibited without concealment, yet without exaggeration, the damage which slavery has done to the whole population of the South, and told us of the successes that have already blessed the efforts of the government and of the Freedmen's Relief Association to repair those damages. Of course, only a beginning of the great work has been made;"
and it will put in requisition all the enterprise and benevolence of the lovers of our country to accomplish it. But it must be done, at whatever cost. And we are grateful for the encouragement which Mrs. Gage gave us to increased exertion. She is a fluent, graceful, and impressive speaker."

The celebration of the third decade of the American Anti-Slavery Society was held in Philadelphia in December, 1863. Mrs. Gage attended the meeting and was one of the speakers. She professed herself surprised at the attitude of many of the speakers toward the slave issue at that period of the struggle. She said in part: 55

"Ladies and Gentlemen: On my lone little isle of the Sea (Paris Island, S. C.) I have hardly known the current events at the North was taking; and I confess that I have listened to the remarks here yesterday and today with some surprise. I did not suppose that there was anyone interested in anti-slavery at the North that had not faith enough to see through all that is going on today, and to believe that slavery is coming to an end.

Why, old Sophy, at her cabin door, would teach you better faith than I have heard from some today. She came to see me after the battle of Fredericksburg, where some of my kindred fell, and found me weeping. "Missie, what makes you cry, honey? This isn't a nigger war, it isn't a secesh war, it is God's war; it will come out all right."

Mrs. Gage had too much faith in the righteousness of the war, she had been in too close contact with slavery, to doubt that the end of that institution was at hand.

In January, 1864, Mrs. Gage left the East and began lecturing in the Middle West. The National Anti-Slavery Standard had served as her address up to this time. Now the Ohio Farmer, which her friend, Mr. S. V. Harris was editing, became her headquarters. The rest of the winter she spent lecturing. She found that people in the west were not as friendly toward the negro as they were in the East. She sometimes found it difficult to find a place in which to lecture — partly due, however, to the fact that many places, especially churches, still closed their doors to women speakers. In all the inclement winter weather, through Pennsylvania, western New York, Illinois, and Missouri, she continued to work, never omitting an evening when she could get an audience to address, speaking for soldiers' aid societies, and giving the proceeds to those who worked for the soldiers, — then for Freedmen's Associations. At every opportunity she pleaded for help for Clara Barton in her work for the wounded and sick soldiers. She had spent some time with Miss Barton, and realized the heroic efforts she was making in this work. Mrs. Gage thought that Miss Barton was doing the most of any on the battlefields since the war began, "and yet," she said, "so modest is she that few except

56 Ohio Farmer. Jan. 5, 1864
57 National Anti-Slavery Standard. June 16, 1864
those who have come into personal contact with her know her worth and reliability." Mrs. Gage was one of those who stood with Miss Barton, aiding and encouraging her in the consummation of her plans.

For her work during that winter of 1863–64 Mrs. Gage asked no fee or reward, thankful if she were given enough to defray her expenses, cheerful if she received nothing.

At the great Mississippi Valley Sanitary and Freedmen's Fair in St. Louis in April, 1864, Mrs. Gage was one of the ardent workers in securing donations and aid for the Freedmen's booth. She had been partly instrumental in getting this booth added to the Sanitary Fair and worked hard to make it successful.

When the summer days made lecturing seem impossible, Mrs. Gage started from St. Louis down the Mississippi to Memphis, Vicksburg and Natchez. On these trips she went as the unsalaried agent of the Western Sanitary Commission, receiving only her expenses, and the goods and provisions wherewith to relieve the wants and misery she met among the suffering men. She spent several weeks in the Soldiers' Home in Vicksburg — a home maintained by the Western Sanitary Commission — taking care of the soldiers who came there. More weeks were spent in

58 Ibid.
59 Brockett and Vaughan. p 690
60 National Anti-Slavery Standard. April 30, 1864
61 Brockett and Vaughan. p 691
the Contraband Hospitals, and the General Hospital for Colored Soldiers. Always she wrote describing the suffering and needs of the soldiers and the freedmen in the hope of getting more help for them.

The strenuous labor and the unhealthy conditions prevailing, however, began to tell upon Mrs. Gage's health and she decided to return North. In September 1864, she wrote:

After visiting Natches, Vicksburg, Davis's Island, contraband camps, home-farms, hospitals, soldiers' homes, and the like, until there came a threatening that I might need a hospital berth in another capacity than that of nurse, and as our government has as yet made no provision for sick white women, and Soldiers' Aids, Freedmen's Reliefs, Union Refugee Associations, and Sanitary Commissions have all ignored the idea that woman is either mortal or subject to mortal ills, I concluded about the first of August to change my base, and by a masterly retreat, or flank movement, or something, to escape the scourging enemy of the army and the South, by coming North and on the twenty-ninth day of August - having gathered my best weapons together and put them all into as good order as possible - I sallied forth from St. Louis, Mo., at half past three on a hot afternoon, in the same omnibus with a round dozen delegates to the Chicago Convention, to make an attack upon the State of Illinois."

Threatened illness alone, however, did not bring her north.

The months she had spent among Union refugees, and unprotected fugitives and freedmen convinced her that her best work was in the lecture fields. "She had but one pair of hands, while her voice might set a hundred, nay, a thousand pairs in motion, and believing that we err if we fail to use our best powers for life's best uses, she again entered the lecturing field." 63

During that month of September, Mrs. Gage lectured twenty-eight times in Illinois. On the evening of September twenty-ninth she gave a lecture in the basement of Dr. Edward Beecher's church in Galesburg, Illinois. On the way home from the church the carriage in which she was riding upset. Mrs. Gage was plunged into a ditch, several ribs were broken and she otherwise injured her left shoulder and lung. 64 For several weeks she was confined to a sick-bed.

As soon as possible, however, she took up her pen again. She had not forgotten her mission. "From my sick bed let me cry out. Forget them (freedmen) in this their fearful hour of extremity. As ye remember the wants of the soldier, so be mindful of the wants of the Freedmen and Union refugees. Slavery and war have despoiled them all," - was the plea she sent out. 65

Mrs. Gage remained in St. Louis, probably at the home of one of her sons or daughter until March of 1865. So crippled

63 Brockett and Vaughan. p 692
64 National Anti-Slavery Standard. Oct. 22, 1864
65 Ibid.
that she was unable to take any active part in the cause so near her heart, she was, nevertheless, interested in what others were doing. An "Industrial Home" for Freedmen and Union Refugees had been established in St. Louis, conducted by some ladies of the city with money and rations supplied by the government and Western Sanitary Commission. Mrs. Gage was delighted with it as this was her idea of the best way to give the negro his opportunity.

IV. After the Civil War. 1865-1870

Exhausted by the work of many years, in ill-health, and wearied from the constant turmoil and upheaval of war scenes, disheartened by the attitude of many States, including Missouri, toward the freed negro, Mrs. Gage moved to the little town of Lambertville in New Jersey, in March, 1865. "Liberty" she said was what took her there. "For this year at least, my home will be in this pleasant village, where there seems to be much of all that life needs to make it calm and happy." 67

A year's rest amid these quiet surroundings did a great deal to improve Mrs. Gage's health, though she never regained the strength of former years. While New Jersey continued to be her home for many years, she was not willing long to remain quiet and inactive. Many things remained still to be done. The leaders of the Woman's Rights movement had voluntarily sus-

66 Ibid. Feb. 11, 1865
67 Ibid. March 25, 1865
pended their activities during the crisis of war. Mrs. Gage, from the peace of Lambertsville, was now one of the first to raise her voice again in behalf of woman. Late in 1865 she wrote to protest the fact that nothing was now said about equality of women. Abolitionists, she pointed out, were glad enough to say it before the war — now it was not mentioned. Consistent with her doctrine of equality of women as well as with her experience among the freed people in the South, was her demand at the Twenty-ninth Annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, that the vote be given to the freedwomen of the South as well as to the freedmen. During the winter of 1866, Mrs. Gage also spent a short time in Washington, renewing friendships with Clara Barton and others who had worked so ably together during the strenuous days of the war. Miss Barton's work was not yet completed. Mrs. Gage wrote a beautiful tribute to Miss Barton, describing the work that she was then doing for the families of the soldiers who had been killed in battle, — an article that was printed in many newspapers throughout the country.

When the first Woman's Rights Convention after the war was held in New York, May 10, 1866, Mrs. Gage was one of the speakers, and was again elected one of the vice-presidents. At this meeting the Anti-Slavery and Woman's Rights Societies merged and took the name "The American Equal Rights Association!"

68 Ibid. Nov. 25, 1865
69 Morgan County Herald (McConnelsville, Ohio) March 9, 1866.
The work was again launched with renewed vigor.

Still determined to earn her own living, Mrs. Gage spent the winter, with a few intervals of rest made necessary by physical weakness, lecturing upon temperance. Many times she was asked why she did not let her sons support her. Her answer invariably was: "My six sons have their own duties. God gives me strength to earn my own bread, and I will do it as long as I can. That is what I want to teach the womanhood of the country." Temperance was the subject of her talks that winter but she always urged that woman should be given the right to vote that she might purify the nation of the evil of intemperance.

In 1867 the American Equal Rights Association again held its Convention in New York in May at the same time as the Temperance Convention. Mrs. Gage attended both. To the Equal Rights assembly Mrs. Gage spoke again of the freedwoman.

"I shall speak", she said, "for the slave woman of the South. I have always lifted my voice for her when I have spoken at all. I will not give up the slave woman into the hands of the slave man to do with as he pleases hereafter. I know the plea that was made to me in South Carolina and down in the Mississippi valley. They said, 'You give us a nominal freedom, but you leave us under the heel of our husbands, who are tyrants almost equal to our masters.' The former slave man of the South has learned his lesson of oppression and wrong of

70 Stanton, Anthony, Gage. Vol II. p 199
his old master; and they think the wife has no right to her earnings. I was often asked, — "Why don't the government pay my wife's earnings to me?" When acting for the Freedman's Aid Society, the order came to us to compel marriage, or to separate families. I issued the order as I was bound to do, as General Superintendent of the Fourth Division under General Saxton. The men came to me and wanted to be married, because they said if they were married in the church, they could manage the women, and take care of their money, but if they were not married the women took their own wages, and did just as they had a mind to. "We don't want to be married in the church, because if we are our husbands will whip the children and whip us if they want to; they are no better than our old masters." 71

Late in the summer of 1867 Mrs. Gage suffered a stroke of paralysis. For months after she had partially recovered she was under treatment at the Swedish Movement Institute in New York City. She improved somewhat, in time, but her days of lecturing were ended.

After 1868 Mrs. Gage could not go to the conventions of the Woman Suffrage Association, but she kept in touch with them through her daughter, Mary E. Gage, who began to take a serious interest in the movement about this time. When the National Woman's Suffrage Association planned to relax their efforts in the various States and concentrate upon the Congress at Washington, many of the members became dissatisfied.

71 Ibid. p 299
This group met in a convention in Cleveland, where they formed the American Woman Suffrage Association, a national organization, with Henry Ward Beecher as its first president. Frances D. Gage's name appeared as one of its supporters, together with many others who had been prominent in the movement for years. 72

V. Literary Work.

Running like a golden thread through the toil, hardships and struggles of Mrs. Gage's life was the poetry through which she so often expressed her feelings and fancies and which added so much to her charm. Impulsive and fanciful by nature, often the only outlet she found was to put her thoughts into verse. She could see beauty where others could not, - in the sights and everyday affairs of life, - and the impulse to express her thoughts seemed irresistible. For some time her verses were strictly private. Written hurriedly, she did not care whether anyone saw them or not. The first ones found their way into the local newspapers through the partial theft of her friends. 73 She had long written verses but it was not until about 1850 that they began to attract public attention. That year they began to appear in the Ohio Cultivator. They

72 Squire, Belle. The Woman Movement in America. p 168
73 Coggeshall, William T. The Poets and Poetry of the West. p 393
soon became extremely popular, as they were about subjects with which people were familiar and were expressed in terms which everyone could understand. The beauty of thought and the simplicity of expression charmed the reader. The rhythm was never studied, but measured only by ear. Mrs. Gage never concentrated her powers of versification upon the construction of a studied poem as a representative of her best talent. In all probability she would not have known how to do it had she tried. For that reason it would not be fair to judge her poetry by the standards of abstract criticism. Measured by the standard of popular appreciation, they stand high indeed.

One of Mrs. Gage's earlier poems to attract attention and appear in many newspapers was:

The Sounds of Industry.  

I love the banging hammer,  
The whirring of the plane,  
The crashing of the busy saw,  
The creaking of the crane,  
The ringing of the anvil,  
The grating of the drill.  
The clattering of the turning-lathe  
The whirling of the mill,  
The buzzing of the spindle,  
The rattling of the loom.
The puffing of the engine,
   And the fan's continuous boom,
The clipping of the tailor's shears
   The driving of the awl,
The sounds of busy labors,
   I love, I love them all.

I love the plowman's whistle,
   The reapers cheerful song
The drover's oft-repeated shout,
   As he spurs his stock along;
The bustle of the market-man,
   As he hies him to the town;
The halloo from the tree-top
   As the ripened fruit comes down;
The busy sound of threshers
   As they clean the ripened grain,
And the huskers' joke and mirth and glee
   'Neath the moonlight on the plain,
The kind voice of the dairyman,
   The shepherd's gentle call -
The sounds of active industry,
   I love, I love them all;

For they tell my longing spirit
   Of the earnestness of life,
How much of all its happiness
Comes out of toil and strife —
Not that toil and strife that fainteth,
   And murmurth all the way, —
Not the toil and strife that groaneth
   Beneath the tyrants sway;
But the toil and strife that springeth
   From a free and willing heart,
A strife which ever bringeth
   To the striver all his part.

Oh! there is a good in labor
   If we labor but aright,
That gives vigor to the day-time
   And a sweeter sleep at night
A good that bringeth pleasure,
   Even to the toiling hours —
For duty cheers the spirit
   As the dew revives the flowers.

Oh! say not that Jehovah
   Bade us labor as a doom,
No, it is his kindest mercy,
   And will scatter half life's gloom.
Then let us still be doing
   Whate'er we find to do —
With an earnest, willing spirit,
   And a strong hand free and true.
On one occasion a gentleman called on Mrs. Gage to ask her to influence her husband against a certain course of action which he admitted was right, but which would harm them politically. As soon as he was gone Mrs. Gage sat down and wrote her feelings in a poem, which soon later was published in the Morgan County Herald. It expressed her idea of the proposal as well as one of her life's principles.

Stand for the Right.

Be bold, be firm, be strong, be true,
And dare to "stand alone,"
Strive for the Right, whate'er you do,
Though helpers there are none.

May, bend not to the swelling surge -
Of error and of wrong,
'Twill bear you on to ruin's verge
With currents wild and strong.

"Stand for the right" - whate'er it be,
Thou'lt find an answering tone
In honest hearts, and thou no more
Be doomed to "stand alone."

The poem that was probably the most popular of the earlier ones was first printed in the Ohio Cultivator - "The Perplexed Housekeeper's Soliloquy".

75 June 13, 1850
The Perplexed Housekeeper's Soliloquy

I wish I had a dozen pairs
   Of hands this very minute;
I'd soon put all those things to rights -
   The very deuce is in it.

There's a big washing to be done,
   One pair of hands to do it,
Sheets, shirts and stockings, coats and pants,
   How will I e're get thru it?

Dinner to get for six or more,
   No loaf left o'er from Sunday;
And baby cross as he can live,
   He's always so on Monday.

And there's the cream, 'tis getting sour,
   And must forthwith be churning,
And here's Bob, wants a button on -
   Which way shall I be turning?

'Tis time the meat was in the pot,
   The bread was worked for baking,
The clothes were taken from the boil -
   Oh dear! the baby's waking!

Hush, baby dear! there hush - oh - sh!

76 Ohio Cultivator, July 15, 1855
I wish he'd sleep a little,
'Till I could run and get some wood
To hurry up that kettle.

Oh dear! oh dear! if P— comes home,
And finds things in this pother,
He'll just begin and tell me all
About his tidy mother!

How nice her kitchen used to be,
His dinner always ready,
Exactly when the noon bell rang—
Hush, hush, dear little Freddy.

And then will come a hasty word,
Right out before I'm thinking
They say that hasty words from wives
Set sober men to drinking.

Now isn't that a great idea,
That men should take to sinning.

Because a weary, half sick wife,
Can't always smile so winning?

When I was young I used to earn
My living without trouble,
Had clothes and pocket money, too,
And hours of leisure double.
I never dreamed of such a fate,
When I, a - laes! was courted -
Wife, mother, nurse, seamstress, dairy woman,
housekeeper, chambermaid, laundress, cook,
and scrub generally, doing the work of six,
For the sake of being supported.

This was too sure to strike a responsive cord in the hearts of thousands of women, not to be instantly popular.

Soarosely a number of the Ohio Cultivator was published without a poem by Mrs. Gage, after 1851. Her poems appeared, too, in other periodicals and newspapers. Not all of them were of the severely practical type. Many were almost lyric and beautiful, even if not mechanically perfect. One, entitled "My Mary", was published in the Western Literary Magazine in 1851.

My Mary.

There's a cot on the bank of Muskingum's bright waters,
Beneath the tall shade of the sycamore tree,
Where the sweetest and fairest of old Morgan's daughters,
Sings sweetly her song in moonlight to me.
Her cheek is as fair as the rosebud, and lighter
Her step than the fawn's, as she skipped through the dale;
The star of the eve is not fairer or brighter
Than the eye of my Mary, who lives in the dale.
Oh! sweet is the song of the lark or canary —
Their notes are all cheerfulness, music and glee,
But sweeter by far is the voice of my Mary,
As sweetly she sings in the moonlight to me.
The worldling may boast of his gold and his pleasures,
And breathe in my ear all his flattering tale,
The choicest and purest, and fairest of treasures
Is the heart of my Mary, who lives in the vale.

When the wild storms of life put my heart in commotion,
And 'tis toss'd to and fro like the waves of the sea,
The voice of my Mary stills every emotion,
As sweetly she sings in the moonlight to me.
Her spirit is kind as the clouds of the even',
As gently they fall on the flowers of the dale,
And life will to me be a foretaste of heaven,
If spent with my Mary who lives in the dale.

Another type, too, was one composed in 1861, to comfort
a mother who had just lost a child.

The Hang Bird's Nest. 77

Walking down the street today,
With my busy thoughts at play,
Spied I on an old elm tree
Pendant 'mong the branches free,

77 Ibid. Feb. 1, 1861
Hung with diamond spangles bright,
Sparkling in the wintry light,
Tossing, with a sad unrest,
Summer's empty Hang Bird's nest.

Where were all the twittering birds,
With their little love-linked words?
Far away to southern homes,
Where no chilling frost wind comes,
They have flown on cheerful wing,
Still to love and still to sing,
"Mong the fragrant orange bowers,
"Mong the spicy fruits and flowers,
There to flit, the livelong day,
Warbling all their joy away.
God hath taught them, and they go
Where no wintry winds e'en blow;
While the last year's frosted nest,
Seems to tell us He knows best.

Mother! lift thine aching head
From that empty cradle bed;
Let thy spirit comfort bring.
He who taught the birds to fly
To a summer clime and sky,
Hath He not, grieved one for you,
Care as deep and love as true?
He hath called thy pet away
From some chilling wintry day
Gone a little while before thee,
Wait in faith, He will restore thee,
To thy darling, on that shore
Where the frosts will come no more,
And welcome thee to endless rest,
Singing, - "Mother, God knew best."

Mrs. Gage was too wholeheartedly devoted to the Woman's movement and the Anti-Slavery cause not to express her feelings in poetry. After starting her lecturing and speaking she did not have much time to write poetry, but she did compose one poem about 1844, called "Woman's Mission." It well shows the intensity of her feeling on this subject.

"Woman's Mission."^78

'Tis said that woman's mission lies

Beside the couch of pain,
To soothe and cheer the suffering heart,
Till it shall smile again.

To bind the soldier's bleeding wound,
To wipe the tear dimm'd eye,
Or o'er the infant's couch of pain
To sing a lullaby.

^78 Morgan County Herald. Nov. 15, 1849
'Tis said we must not mingle in
Man's party strife and feud,
That we are all too beautiful,
Too delicate and good.
We're bid to calmly fold our hands
Amid the glorious strife,
That now stirs every noble heart,
For Freedom and for life.

And shall we heed the flat'ring tale,
And coldly close our ears,
While chained humanity implores
Our aid with groans and tears?
The darkest, deepest, direst doom,
With all its crimes and shame,
That ever cursed the human heart,
Is laid on woman's name.

The proudest blood Columbia owns,
In equal streams may lave
The infant's veins, it matters not,
Its mother is a slave.
Its father's word may rule the realm,
His voice hold crowds in awe,
Its mother and her child are slaves,
So saith the Christian law.
Must woman bear this horrid curse,
In our own freedom land?
And woman's voice be hush'd and still,
And nerveless woman's hand?
Must Hope, and Love, and Virtue be
The scorn and sport of knaves,
Because our Christian laws have made
Our wives and mothers slaves.

Forbid it Heaven! - Oh sister! All
Free daughters of the North,
Rouse! think and feel, and speak and act,
And let your prayers go forth.
Rouse! - Woman's strength may right the wrong
If she be true and brave;
And woman's influence may break
The fetters of the slave.

After she was no longer able to take part in the reforms she had so long advocated, she had more time, but far away from her native hills and gardens, not so much inspiration. One poem, probably the best of them all, that she wrote during this time shows that her thoughts turned to her former home.

The Rain Upon the Roof. 79

Long ago a poet dreaming,

79 Thompson, Slason. The Rumbler Poets. p 362
Weaving fancy's warp and woof,
Penned a tender, soothing poem
On the "Rain upon the Roof."

Once I read it, and its beauty
Filled my heart with memories sweet;
Days of childhood fluttered round me,
Violets sprang beneath my feet,
And my gentle, loving mother
Spoke again in accents mild,
Surging every wayward passion
Of her happy, thoughtless child.
Then I heard the swallows twittering
Underneath the cabin eaves,
And the laughing shout of Willie,
Up among the maple leaves.
Then I blessed the poets dreaming—
Blessed his fancy's warp and woof,
And I wept o'er memories treasured
As the rain fell on the roof.

Years ago I lost the poem,
But its sweetness lingered still,
As the freshness of the valley
Marks where flowed the springtime rill.
Lost to reach, but not to feeling;
For the rain-drop never falls
O'er my head with pattering music,
    But it peoples memory's halls
With the old familiar faces
    Loved and treasured long ago.
Treasured now as in life's springtime, -
    For no change my heart can know.
And I live again my childhood
    In the home far, far away;
Roam the woodland, orchard, wildwood
    With my playmates still at play;
Then my grey hairs press the pillow,
    Holding all the world aloof.
Dreaming sweetly as I listen
    To the rain upon the roof.

Every pattering drop that falleth,
    Seemeth like an angel's tread
Bringing messages of mercy
    To the weary heart and head.
Pleasant thoughts of years departed
    Pleasant soothings for today,
Earnest longings for to-morrow,
    Hopings for the far away.
For I know each drop that falleth
    Comes to bless the thirsty earth
Making seed to bud and blossom,
    Springing all things into birth.
As the radiant bow that scattereth
All our faithlessness with proof
Of a seedtime and a harvest
So the rain upon the roof.

After the work of the War was over Mrs. Gage again took up her writing for children. Under the title "Aunt Fanny" she had long written short tales for various children's periodicals, which she now continued. Two years, 1867 and 1868, she wrote a series of interesting articles on "Early Times in Ohio" for the "Little Corporal" a periodical for boys and girls. She again wrote for "The Little Pilgrim," another periodical for little folks. Besides these short stories, Mrs. Gage wrote several books for children. In 1872 "Elsie Magoon, or the Old Still House" was published. The following year she wrote "Steps Upward" and soon after that "Gertie's Sacrifice." In 1872 a collection of her poems was completed and published in Philadelphia under the title, "Poems" 31

Mrs. Gage died in Greenwich, Conn., November 9, 1884, at the age of seventy-six. Although for many years out of the public eye, the announcement of her death in the newspapers must have awakened many memories of earlier days of strenuous activity. Mrs. Gage always maintained that if there was

50 Morgan County Herald. Oct. 12, 1867
51 Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography. p 321
52 New York Tribune. Nov. 13, 1884
heroism in any part of her life it was displayed in the early struggle against the wickedness, prejudice, and bigotry of mankind. "If as a woman" she once said, "to take the platform amidst the hissing and scorn, and newspaper vituperations, to maintain the rights of woman to the legitimate use of all the talents God invests her with, to maintain the rights of the slave in the very ears of the masters; to hurl anathemas at intemperance in the very camps of the dram-sellers; if to continue for forty years, in spite of all opposing forces, to press the triune cause persistently, consistently, and unflinchingly, entitles me to a humble place among those noble ones who have gone about doing good, you can put me in that place as it suits you." 83