

INTRODUCTION.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT was born on the 27th of April, 1759. Her father—a quick-tempered and unsettled man, capable of beating wife, or child, or dog—was the son of a manufacturer who made money in Spitalfields, when Spitalfields was prosperous. Her mother was a rigorous Irish-woman, of the Dixons of Ballyshannon. Edward John Wollstonecraft—of whose children, besides Mary, the second child, three sons and two daughters lived to be men and women—in course of time got rid of about ten thousand pounds, which had been left him by his father. He began to get rid of it by farming. Mary Wollstonecraft's first-remembered home was in a farm at Epping. When she was five years old the family moved to another farm, by the Chelmsford Road. When she was between six and seven years old they moved again, to the neighbourhood of Barking. There they remained three years before the next move, which was to a farm near Beverley, in Yorkshire. In Yorkshire they remained six years, and Mary Wollstonecraft had there what education fell to her lot between the ages of ten and sixteen. Edward John Wollstonecraft then gave up farming to venture upon a commercial speculation. This caused him to live for a year and a half at Queen's Row, Hoxton. His daughter Mary was then sixteen; and while at Hoxton she had her education advanced by the friendly care of a deformed clergyman—a Mr. Clare—who lived next door, and stayed so much at home that his one pair of shoes had lasted him for fourteen years.

But Mary Wollstonecraft's chief friend at this time was an accomplished girl only two years older than herself, who maintained her father, mother, and family by skill in drawing. Her name was Frances Blood, and she especially, by her example and direct instruction, drew out her young friend's powers. In 1776, Mary Wollstonecraft's father, a rolling stone, rolled into Wales. Again he was a