

INTRODUCTION.

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"The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath."

Mary Wollstonecraft left Lisbon for England late in December, 1785. When she came back she found Fanny's poor parents anxious to go back to Ireland; and as she had been often told that she could earn by writing, she wrote a pamphlet of 162 small pages—"Thoughts on the Education of Daughters"—and got ten pounds for it. This she gave to her friend's parents to enable them to go back to their kindred. In all she did there is clear evidence of an ardent, generous, impulsive nature. One day her friend Fanny Blood had repined at the unhappy surroundings in the home she was maintaining for her father and mother, and longed for a little home of her own to do her work in. Her friend quietly found rooms, got furniture together, and told her that her little home was ready; she had only to walk into it. Then it seemed strange to Mary Wollstonecraft that Fanny Blood was withheld by thoughts that had not been uppermost in the mood of complaint. She thought her friend irresolute, where she had herself been generously rash. Her end would have been happier had she been helped, as many are, by that calm influence of home in which some knowledge of the world passes from father and mother to son and daughter, without visible teaching and preaching, in easiest companionship of young and old from day to day.

The little payment for her pamphlet on the "Education of Daughters" caused Mary Wollstonecraft to think more seriously of earning by her pen. The pamphlet seems also to have advanced her credit as a teacher. After giving up her day school, she spent some weeks at Eton with the Rev. Mr. Prior, one of the masters there, who recommended her as governess to the daughters of Lord Kingsborough, an Irish viscount, eldest son of the Earl of Kingston. Her way of teaching was by winning love, and she obtained the warm affection of the eldest of her pupils, who became afterwards Countess Mount-Cashel. In the summer of 1787, Lord Kingsborough's family, including Mary Wollstonecraft, was at Bristol Hot-wells, before going to the Continent. While there, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her little tale published as "Mary, a Fiction,"