Voice of Liberty, Primary Source Document 2


Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Man* brought her to the forefront of the literary scene. Once *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published, her husband, William Godwin, wrote in his *Memoirs* that “no female writer ever obtained so great a degree of celebrity throughout Europe (*Memoirs*, p. 73).” Although opinion of her teachings remained divided for many years, she is today considered to be among the most admired feminist intellectuals.

“It is then an affection for the whole human race that makes my pen dart rapidly along to support what I believe to be the cause of virtue: and the same motive leads me earnestly to wish to see woman placed in a station in which she would advance, instead of retarding, the progress of those glorious principles that give a substance to morality. . . . Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge. . . . And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? . . .”