

## WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE



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## A SHORT HISTORY OF A GREAT MOVEMENT.

BY MILLICENT GARRETT  
FAWCETT, LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF ASSOCIATION AND UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES



LONDON: T. C. & E. C. JACK  
67 LONG ACRE, W.C., AND EDINBURGH  
NEW YORK: THE DODGE PUBLISHING CO.

It is not to be thought of that the flood  
Of British freedom, which to the open sea  
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity  
Hath flowed "with pomp of waters unwithstood"—  
Road by which all might come and go that would,  
And bear out freights of worth to foreign lands;  
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands  
Should perish, and to evil and to good  
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung  
Armoury of the invincible knights of old :  
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake—the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held. In everything we're sprung  
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

—W. WORDSWORTH.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS

WE suffragists have no cause to be ashamed of the founders of our movement—

“In everything we're sprung  
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.”

Mary Wollstonecraft<sup>1</sup> started the demand of women for political liberty in England, Condorcet in France,<sup>2</sup> and the heroic group of anti-slavery agitators in the United States. It is true that Horace Walpole called Mary Wollstonecraft “a hyena in petticoats.” But this proves nothing except his profound ignorance of her character and aims. Have we not in our own time heard the ladies who first joined the Primrose League described by an excited politician as “filthy witches”? The epithet of course was as totally removed from any relation to the facts as that which Horace Walpole applied to Mary Wollstonecraft. William Godwin's touching memoir of his wife, Mr. Kegan Paul's *William Godwin: his Friends and Contemporaries*, and Mrs. Pennell's Biography show Mary Wollstonecraft as a woman of exceptionally pure and exalted character.

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792.

<sup>2</sup> See *Le vote des Femmes*, pp. 16-22, par Ferdinand Buisson, Député de la Seine et Président de la Commission du Suffrage Universelle. Condorcet had a predecessor in Mademoiselle Jars de Gournay, the friend of Montaigne. See Miss E. Sichel's *Michel de Montaigne*, p. 137.