

*Released with her by-line a year before *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,
and outlining Wollstonecraft's liberated approach to children's education*

Wollstonecraft, Mary.

Original Stories from Real Life; with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness.

London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1791. First Thus. Contemporary calf back to style with morocco spine label stamped in gilt. Trivial offsetting to endpapers. Contemporary ownership signature of E. Borless to head of title page. Measures 101 x 165mm. Collating viii, [4], 177, [3, advertisements]: complete as issued, being the variant without half title or plates per Windle. In all, an exceptionally clean and pleasing copy of this important work. First published in 1788, the present edition was the first to record Mary Wollstonecraft's name on the title page and was released a year before her pivotal feminist treatise *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Drawing on her experience as a governess as well as her early career composing oratory manuals for women, Wollstonecraft produces *Original Stories* to promote a method of education that takes into account that "every child requires a different mode of treatment" and that harsh, rote approaches to teaching "suffer children to be bound with fetters that their half-formed faculties cannot break." Instead, her work posits that "knowledge should be gradually imparted, and flow more from example than teaching...the improvements of those instruments of the understanding is the object education should have constantly in view." To this end, her Wollstonecraft provides "Conversations that are intended to assist the teacher as well as the pupil." Using stories and dialogues featuring Mary and Caroline, two girls bereft of their mother and left to the charge of a caring governess, Wollstonecraft builds a memorable and accessible series of narratives that teach about the treatment of animals, the ranges of human emotion, the dangers of indulgence, to proper treatment of servants, and the importance of charity. In many ways, the book was a logical lead-up to *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. "Not surprisingly, [Wollstonecraft] had strong views about children's education. Wollstonecraft desired nothing less than liberating children, both boys and girls, from what she believed were irrational modes of education...her hyper-rational stories became influential models for expressing philosophies of education through children's literature" (Botting). Indeed, such a model for education had the capacity to equalize the system, giving both girls and boys an opportunity to learn, thrive, and rise up as equally prepared citizens. (2867)