

In the year 1818 a woman living in Massachusetts held her newborn baby and wept. She cried because her eighth child was a girl. "A woman's life is so hard," she moaned. Hannah Stone was a farmer's wife. She knew all about the hard life women led. She cooked for a very large family. She cleaned and scrubbed, churned the butter, and made clothes for all the family.

Hannah Stone wept for her daughter because the child had been born in a country ruled by white men. All the people in high posts in the United States were white men. Senators and members of the House of Representatives, governors, soldiers, lawyers, and doctors were all white men. Almost all the people who went to college were white men. Most of the jobs, money, power belonged to white men.

The men who wrote the Declaration of Independence had said: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . ." But no woman in the United States was equal to a man! A woman could be arrested, tried, and jailed. The policeman who arrested her was a man. The judge and members of the jury who tried her were men. A woman could not even give evidence in court.

A married woman had few rights at all. If she were hurt in an accident, her husband could sue for the amount that the loss of her labor had cost him. Everything that she had belonged to her husband.

Hannah Stone's eighth baby was named Lucy. When Lucy Stone grew up, she made up her mind that life would not be as hard for all women as it had been for her mother. The first thing Lucy wanted was more education for

women. Only one college in the entire country—Oberlin in Ohio—admitted black people and white women as well as white men. For nine years Lucy taught school and saved her money to go there. But even at Oberlin she found the women students treated differently than men. Unlike men, women were not allowed to debate or read their own essays at graduation.

Women were asking for their rights. Before the Declaration of Independence was written Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John: ". . . in the new code of laws which I suppose will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

John Adams, who became the second president of the United States, wrote to her: "As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh."

While men laughed, women despaired. The Declaration of Independence spoke only of men. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" were not for women. The signers of that declaration did not think women were as bright or as capable as men. Lucy Stone and many other brave women devoted their lives to the cause of equal rights. It was a long, hard fight. Almost one hundred and fifty years passed before the women of the United States were given the vote. All during the nineteenth century women struggled to gain the freedom that white men had already won.

## CHECK YOUR READING

1. **Hannah Stone cried because her baby was**
  - A blind
  - B red-haired
  - C female
2. **A woman in the United States of the early 1800s**
  - A usually worked hard at home
  - B had few legal rights
  - C Both A and B
3. **In 1818 a woman could**
  - A be arrested
  - B serve on a jury
  - C give evidence
4. **Before she went to college, Lucy Stone**
  - A traveled in Europe
  - B taught school for nine years
  - C worked in a factory
5. **When Lucy Stone went to Oberlin, it was different from any other college because it**
  - A had swimming classes
  - B taught Greek
  - C admitted women and blacks
6. **The first thing Lucy Stone wanted for women was**
  - A the right to vote
  - B better pay
  - C more education
7. **Abigail Adams believed in**
  - A equal pay for women
  - B day-care centers
  - C laws more favorable to women
8. **In response to his wife's letter, John Adams**
  - A became furious
  - B laughed at her
  - C reconsidered his ideas
9. **The signers of the Declaration of Independence thought that women**
  - A were less capable than men
  - B should go to college
  - C were smarter than men
10. **The author suggests that the writers of the Declaration of Independence**
  - A were concerned about women's rights
  - B considered the slavery issue carefully
  - C set forth the rights of white men