

**MRS. SAMUEL RIPLEY:  
FROM "WORTHY WOMEN  
OF OUR FIRST CENTURY"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649653089

Mrs. Samuel Ripley: From "Worthy Women of Our First Century" by Elizabeth Hoar

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ELIZABETH HOAR**

**MRS. SAMUEL RIPLEY:  
FROM "WORTHY WOMEN  
OF OUR FIRST CENTURY"**



MRS SAMUEL RIPLEY

---

FROM  
"WORTHY WOMEN OF OUR FIRST CENTURY"

---

J B LIPPINCOTT & CO  
PHILADELPHIA  
1877

## MRS. SAMUEL RIPLEY.

---

### CHAPTER I.

IN gathering up the treasures of the last century, some record has been desired of the life of MRS. SARAH ALDEN RIPLEY, of Massachusetts.

Mrs. Ripley was known and revered in the region where she lived, as one who combined rare and living knowledge of literature and science with the household skill and habits of personal labor needful to New England women of limited means, and with the tenderest affection and care for the young brothers and sisters whom her mother's delicate health and death left to her charge, and for the seven children of her own marriage who grew up under her eye in the country parsonage at Waltham. To the ordinary cares of her station were added those of assisting her husband in the cares of a boys' boarding-school, both in housekeeping and teaching. These claims were met with disinterested devotion. And amid all the activity of her busy life the love and habit of acquiring knowledge, which was the life of her age as of her ardent youth, kept even pace.

To a friend has now been committed the trust of making some selections from Mrs. Ripley's letters written in youth, in early married life, in the later days when her children had grown up and rest seemed approaching, and in the last days at the "Old Manse" in Concord, her husband's paternal inheritance, to which they had retired in the spring of 1846, as a paradise of rest in age. The letters thus arrange themselves in four chapters. As a continuous history of events, they leave many gaps unfilled. At times of domestic changes,

whether joyful or sorrowful, the family, never widely scattered, drew at once together, and there was no need of letters in the personal presence of filial and friendly sympathy. The friends also who were dearest to her youth and middle life were all within a near circle of residence. Thus, as to many of the most interesting events of her life, no written record from her hand remains.

No better sketch of Mrs. Ripley can be found than the memorial written by Mr. R. W. Emerson at the time of her death. This will be found upon a later page. Their friendship had begun early and lasted long. Mr. Emerson's aunt, Miss Mary Emerson, the half-sister of Mr. Ripley, was a woman of genius, who had much influence in the early training of Mr. Emerson and his brothers. She had heard of the young Sarah Bradford and sought her out\* in the household retreat in Boston where she devoted to study the time unclaimed by domestic duties; and the friendship which followed included the Emerson children† so dear to the elder lady. After Miss Bradford's marriage the claims of kindred also brought these boys to their uncle Ripley's house in school and college vacations, and the intercourse so precious to both sides was never interrupted but by death.

Mr. F. B. Sanborn, who in Mrs. Ripley's later years at Concord became very valuable to her as a companion in study and an affectionate minister to her enjoyment in many kind offices of friendship, wrote at the time of her death about her early studies thus: "It should be remembered that in the early part of this century, when Mrs. Ripley laid the foundation of her extensive knowledge of languages, of philosophy and literature, the aids to study were few and imperfect in

---

\* See Mrs. Ripley's letter to Mr. Simmons of October 7, 1844.

† The names of the Emerson children, excepting two who died very young, were William, Ralph Waldo, Edward Bliss, Peter Bulkeley, and Charles Chauncy. Edward and Charles died in early manhood; they were young men of the greatest promise: their death is commemorated by their brother in his poem entitled "Dirge." In the "May Day and Other Pieces" is another tribute to the memory of Edward.

New England. A good dictionary of Latin or Greek did not exist in English; editions of the ancient authors were rare and often very poor, while of the modern languages, except the French, scarcely anything was known in all this region. But the difficulties in the way did not prevent Mrs. Ripley from acquiring rapidly, and with sufficient correctness, a knowledge of the Latin, Greek, French, and Italian languages, and subsequently the German; with the literature of all which she became familiar, and kept up this familiarity till her failing strength made study, and even reading, irksome."

Wherever it is possible, the editor will avail herself of the reminiscences of Mrs. Ripley's friends in giving such explanation as is necessary for connecting the different series of letters with each other. But the letters themselves will best report the life of the writer.

Sarah Alden Bradford was born in Boston, July 31, 1793, and was the eldest child of Captain Gamaliel Bradford. Two brothers followed her, Gamaliel, afterwards a well-known physician and citizen of Boston, and Daniel, who studied law, and died early in Mississippi. Then followed two sisters, Martha, afterwards the wife of Dr. Josiah Bartlett, of Concord, Massachusetts, and Margaret, the wife of Mr. Seth Ames, now one of the justices of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. George, her youngest brother, whom she almost wholly educated up to the time when he entered Harvard College, and Hannah, her youngest sister, who was the wife and is now the widow of the late Mr. A. H. Fiske, a prominent lawyer in Boston, completed the number of seven children, to the three youngest of whom Sarah stood in the place of a mother: her own children were not nearer to her heart. Her father, who was a sea-captain, was often absent on voyages, and her mother's delicate health gave to the eldest daughter, as she grew up, a large share in the care of this numerous family. The youngest brother and sister still survive.

Sarah attended a school taught by Mr. Cummings, well known in days long past as the author of a school geography, of whom she speaks in one of her latest letters as "my old



school-master, to whom I owe the foundation of all I know worth speaking of." Her teacher asked her one day if she would like to study Latin. It was a fortnight before she could make up her mind to ask her father's leave, but one day she came home and with great timidity said, "Father, may I study Latin?" Her father laughed, and exclaimed, "A girl study Latin! Yes, study Latin if you want to. You may study anything you please." This, as it will be seen, was opening the door into a wide field.

Captain Bradford's father and other relatives lived in Duxbury, near Plymouth. In her occasional visits to this place Sarah had formed an intimate friendship with Abba Allyn, the daughter of Dr. Allyn, the minister of Duxbury. He himself took an especial interest in his daughter's young friend, to which she never ceased to respond in grateful acknowledgment. The girls read together, and explored the woods and swamps in company, looking wistfully at the flowers they gathered, longing for knowledge to detect the laws and secrets of nature. After one of these visits, Sarah wrote to her friend Abba a formal little letter proposing a correspondence. The proposal was accepted, and the first selection from Mrs. Ripley's letters will be a few from the earlier ones in the life-long series which passed between the two friends. The first letter, to which I have referred, is duly dated, "April 15th, 1809." But this is almost the only date in the whole series: so that the editor can only guess at the order in which the letters followed each other by the increased freedom of the style and handwriting, and by the order of studies and topics, when a new book rises to mark the progress of the months; as in Dante's pilgrimage the hours and seasons are marked only by the succession of the constellations. The correspondence, as I have said, began in 1809. The Bradford family afterwards spent a year in Duxbury, returning to Boston in 1811. After that time the letters continued with confidence and affection unabated, and the friendship never ceased through life.

MRS. SAMUEL RIPLEY. 7

MISS BRADFORD TO MISS ALLYN.

[About 1809.]

"MY DEAR ABBA,—

"I am sorry to perceive that you have greatly mistaken the motive which has induced me lately to mix less with the world than heretofore. You ascribe it to depression of mind, for which you entreat me to assign a reason. You are much deceived, my friend. God has continually blessed me since I came into this world, and I should be very ungrateful if I were discontented or unhappy. He has given me life, and hereafter I shall be accountable to him for the manner in which I have improved the time and privileges afforded me. At present I am favored with the means of acquiring useful knowledge. If, instead of employing the season of youth in improving my mind, I spend it in idle visiting, in preparing for balls and parties, neglecting the advantages afforded me, can I reasonably expect that they will always be continued to me? I do not intend to give up all society; I only intend to relinquish that from which I can gain no good. Be assured I wish to conceal nothing from you, and if I were in affliction your participation would greatly lessen it. Write to me the manner in which you employ your time. Your papa informed me you had become an adept in spinning. Have you begun Virgil? I must bid you good-by, my dearest and best friend, and it is my earnest desire that you may be happy in this world and that which is to come. Don't expose this letter.

"S. A. B."

---

"As the spring advances I am more and more desirous to be with you. The grass in our yard begins to look green, and the lilac-trees have leaved. We consider our yard and garden quite a farm in comparison with the yards belonging to the new-fashioned houses, which are in general about as large as your back room. So that, although I am not in the country, I am better off than many of my neighbors. Do you find any pretty wild flowers? If you have never examined a dan-

delion flower, you will find it very curious,—the downy wings of the seeds, by which they are scattered far and wide, the perfect uniformity of the little flowers, each with its pistil and five stamens, united by the anthers, the filaments separate, almost too small to be distinguished with the naked eye. The same order, regularity, and beauty are visible in the least as in the greatest works of creation. Do you think a dandelion could have been the work of chance? Surely that study cannot be entirely useless which can make even this most despised of flowers a source of admiration and entertainment, a demonstration of the hand of a Creator. I saw the other evening in one of our neighbors' yards a Lombardy poplar in full bloom, a sight I never saw before; but, as my face was swollen with the ague, I could not get a blossom. I believe they are of the same class as the balsam poplar, which I have often seen in bloom. Father has frequently recommended to me a poem called Darwin's Botanic Garden. I think I can borrow it at Judge Davis's; and I am determined to bring it to Duxbury with me, that we may enjoy it together."

---

In a later letter she says,—

"There are to be botanical lectures next winter in Boston, but I suppose the pine woods must be our lecture-room, and nature our herbalist."

---

In another letter, after analyzing for her friend the Linnæan System and Darwin's Botanic Garden, her last book, she ends, "But it is washing-day, and I must run and fold my clothes: so good-by. . . . The clothes are not quite dry, so here I come again. I thought at first I would read a little; but when I get in a notion of writing to you I can attend to nothing else till the rage is over. I study or read morning and evening, when not prevented by company. How we might improve these long winter evenings together!"