THE series of "American Men of Letters," edited by Charles Dudley Warner and published by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., gives promise of forming a choice library of biographical literature. Four numbers have been issued thus far, the last of which, containing the life of George Ripley, by Octavius Brooks Frothingham, preserves the records of a singularly earnest and honorable career. Through want of tact as a biographer, Mr. Frothingham fails to endow the figure of Mr. Ripley with that vital interest which instinct tells us rightfully belonged to it; yet, despite this loss, the memorial is to be cherished for its intrinsic historical and ethical value. Mr. Ripley was born in that brilliant decade at the beginning of the present century, which brought forth so many eminent men and women of genius—Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Childs, to mention no others—who have added fame to our country by their service to letters, to morals, and to humanity. The date of Mr. Ripley's birth was in 1802, and the place of his nativity Greenfield, Mass. His father was a merchant, in circumstances which admitted, without sacrifice, of the liberal education of the son. It was the choice of the latter to enter the clerical profession, and the incidents which befel him when passing through college and the divinity school at Cambridge are related by his own letters of that period. These declare him to have been a studious, grave, sincere, high-minded youth, possessed of good but not showy abilities, which, founded upon a sterling character and actuated by noble resolutions, ensured the performance of a worthy part in the world. At the age of twenty-four Mr. Ripley had finished his preparatory course and accepted the charge of a Unitarian society formed expressly for him in the city of Boston. His connection with this church continued for fourteen years, during which he labored faithfully for its interests, and was rewarded by the love and esteem of his parishioners. But his success was not commensurate with his aspirations; and at the end of the term stated he resigned his office voluntarily, and soon after retired altogether from the ministry. It was at this time that an "enthusiasm for humanity" began to agitate thoughtful minds, and projects for advancing social reforms by means of communal associations were rife first in the old world and then in the new. One of its most interesting outgrowths in the United States was the institution of Brook Farm, to the support of which Mr. Ripley gave his most ardent hope and efforts. He was the leader of the enterprise, and had for colaborers a distinguished company, first of whom should ever be named his gifted and heroic wife, who bore through the seven years which the experiment lasted, a burden of toil, anxiety, privation, and sacrifice, not less exacting than his own nor less patiently borne. Many details of the history of Brook Farm are reported here which we have never seen elsewhere, and they occupy one of the most entertaining portions of the biography. The experience at Brook Farm came to an end in 1847, leaving the founder of the association heavily in debt, and disappointed, though not broken in spirit. And now for the third time he began life anew, repairing to the city of New York with the purpose of earning a livelihood and paying his debts by the labor of his pen. His work, confined chiefly to the department of literary criticism, was precarious for awhile and poorly paid, but it was ably done and gradually gained security and consideration. In 1849 his services were engaged on the "Tribune," the rate of compensation increasing by slow stages from $5 per week to $10, to $15, to $25, to $30, to $50, and finally in 1871 to $75, where it remained to the end. Of the amount and importance of the work which Mr. Ripley contributed to the "Tribune," it is unnecessary for us to speak. He may be said to have established the system of literary criticism on our daily press, and he set for it a high standard which reflected credit upon himself and the paper which employed him. Throughout the thirty-three years of his residence in New York, the life of Mr. Ripley was that of a hard-working journalist, devoting his days and evenings almost exclusively to books and manuscripts. He was a prolific contributor to many publications beside the "Tribune," and with all the rest found time to perform the labors of associate editor of the "New American Cyclopædia." His toil closed only with his life, the last of his criticisms appearing in the "Tribune" of June 18th, and his death occurring scarcely more than a fortnight

later, July 4th, 1880. He left no books, his writing being all of that fugitive sort which perishes with the periodical which contains it; yet it had an influence on the literary taste of the age, the limits of which are beyond calculation. To the influence of his work as a minister, a social reformer, and a literary critic, is to be added the influence of his spotless life, his genial, upright and unselfish character. These altogether made George Ripley in his comparative retirement a shining light among American men of letters.