



Annie Adams Fields: Woman of Letters

Rita K. Gollin

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A comprehensive biography of an exemplary woman, this book tells the story of Annie Adams Fields (1834-1915), one of the leading figures in nineteenth-century Boston's cultural circles. Although often defined in terms of her famous husband, publisher James T. Fields of Ticknor & Fields, she was, as this book demonstrates, a person of significant intellectual and social accomplishments in her own right.

After Fields entered her remarkable companionate marriage at age twenty, she was welcomed into friendship by such eminent writers as Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Dickens. But it was not simply as a dutiful wife that she invited Emerson to lecture to a group of friends in the library of her home, or did literary research for Harriet Beecher Stowe, or advised her husband on submissions to the *Atlantic Monthly*. As Rita K. Gollin shows, Fields also pursued her own imperatives of self-fulfillment and service to others. A published poet, essayist, and novelist, she also wrote dozens of biographies of famous writers she had known. She founded innovative charities for Boston's poor and campaigned for women's issues, including the right to vote and to be admitted to medical schools. These pursuits continued after she was widowed in 1881 and began a loving partnership with Sarah Orne Jewett -- a "Boston marriage" that ended only with Jewett's death in 1909.

A shrewd nurturer of many women writers -- Rebecca Harding Davis, Lucy Larcom, and Willa Cather among them -- and the trusted friend of many illustrious men, Fields learned to move vigorously within the public sphere without violating traditional proprieties--as a woman, as an effective social reformer, and as a writer with wares to promote in the burgeoning literary marketplace.

Fields emerges from this thoroughly researched and highly readable work as a woman who both absorbed and challenged the sometimes conflicting values of her time, gender, and class.

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