

# Mary Sargeant (Neal) Gove Nichols Biography

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# Biography

Mary Sargeant (Neal) Gove Nichols (10 August 1810-30 May 1884), reformer and popular author, was a self-educated Goffstown, New Hampshire, girl. In 1831 she married Hiram Gove, an unscrupulous man whose domineering attitude made their marriage an unhappy one, ending in divorce after a long separation, in 1847. Mary Gove made a name for herself by being associated with "free love" ideas and by supporting all nature of reforms, including mesmerism, spiritualism, Fourierism, and temperance, but she is best known for her activities on behalf of health reform. She had lectured young women on health throughout the 1830s and in 1842 wrote *Lectures to Ladies in Anatomy and Physiology* (Boston: Saxton & Peirce). In the 1840s she moved to New York City, where she befriended Edgar Allan Poe and became interested in water-cure, a system proposing that water, as applied by various methods and in varying temperatures, could have medicinal value. She also published a number of stories and novels. In 1848 she married a fellow reformer, Thomas Low Nichols, and they published *Nichols' Journal of Health, Water-Cure, and Human Progress*. Her novel, *Mary Lyndon; or the Revelations of a Life* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1855), describes her own reform activities and personal life. The Nichols moved to England at the outbreak of the Civil War and remained there until their deaths.