

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust  
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Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
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Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo  
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht  
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz  
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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**The Life of Samuel Taylor  
Coleridge 1838**

James Gillman

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**THE LIFE**  
**OF**  
**SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE**

**BY JAMES GILLMAN**

1838

'... But some to higher hopes  
Were destined; some within a finer mould  
Were wrought, and temper'd with a purer flame:  
To these the Sire Omnipotent unfolds  
The world's harmonious volume, there to read  
The transcript of himself ....'



TO JOSEPH HENRY GREEN, F.R.S.  
PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY, ETC.  
ETC.  
THE HONOURED FAITHFUL AND BELOVED FRIEND OF  
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE,  
THESE VOLUMES  
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY IN-  
SCRIBED.



## PREFACE.

The more frequently we read and contemplate the lives of those eminent men so beautifully traced by the amiable Izaak Walton, the more we are impressed with the sweetness and simplicity of the work. Walton was a man of genius—of simple calling and more simple habits, though best known perhaps by his book on Angling; yet in the scarcely less attractive pages of his biographies, like the flowing of the gentle stream on which he sometimes cast his line, to practise "the all of treachery he ever learnt," he leads the delighted reader imperceptibly on, charmed with the natural beauty of his sentiments, and the unaffected ease and simplicity of his style.

In his preface to the Sermons of (that pious poet and divine,) Dr. Donne, so much may be found applicable to the great and good man whose life the author is now writing, that he hopes to be pardoned for quoting from one so much more able to delineate rare virtues and high endowments: "And if he shall now be demanded, as once Pompey's poor bondman was, who art thou that alone hast the honour to bury the body of Pompey the great?" so who is he who would thus erect a funeral pile to the memory of the honoured dead? ...

With the writer of this work, during the latter twenty years of his life, Coleridge had been domesticated; and his intimate knowledge of that illustrious character induces him to hope that his present undertaking, "however imperfectly it may set forth the memory he fain would honour," will yet not be considered presumptuous; inasmuch as he has had an opportunity of bringing together facts and anecdotes, with various memoranda never before published, some of which will be found to have much of deep interest, of piety and of loveliness.

At the same time he has also been desirous of interweaving such information as he has been enabled to collect from the early friends of Coleridge, as well as from those of his after-life. Thus, he trusts, he has had the means of giving, with truth and correctness, a faith-

ful portraiture of one whom he so dearly loved, so highly prized. Still he feels that from various causes, he has laboured under many and great difficulties.

First, he never contemplated writing this Memoir, nor would he have made the attempt, had it not been urged on him as a duty by friends, whom Coleridge himself most respected and honoured; they, "not doubting that his intimate knowledge of the author, and dear love to his memory, might make his diligence useful."

Secondly, the duties of a laborious profession, rendered still more arduous by indifferent health—added to many sorrows, and leisure (if such it might be called,) which permitted only occasional attention to the subject—and was liable to frequent interruptions; will, he flatters himself, give him a claim to the candour and kindness of his readers. And if Coleridge's "glorious spirit, now in heaven, could look down upon him, he would not disdain this well meant sacrifice to his memory—for whilst his conversation made him, and many others happy below, his humility and gentleness were also pre-eminent;—and divines have said, those virtues that were but sparks upon earth, become great and glorious flames in heaven."

## LIFE OF COLERIDGE.

### CHAPTER I.

BIRTH-PLACE OF COLERIDGE. — SLIGHT SKETCH OF HIS PAR-  
ENTS. — WHIMSICAL  
ANECDOTES HE USED TO RELATE OF HIS FATHER, &C. — AS A  
PASTOR, HOW MUCH  
BELOVED. — HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS ENUMERATED. —  
THE DEATH OF HIS  
FATHER. — HIS ENTRANCE AT CHRIST'S HOSPITAL. — LAMB'S  
ACCOUNT OF HIM WHEN  
AT SCHOOL. — WRITES THIS ACCOUNT UNDER THE NAME OF  
ELIA. — LAMB'S  
ADMISSION THAT HE MEANT COLERIDGE FOR THE  
"FRIENDLESS BOY." — THE  
DELICACY OF HIS STOMACH. — HIS FIRST ATTEMPT AT MAK-  
ING VERSE WHEN A  
SCHOOL BOY. — AND CONTINUATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS  
WHEN AT SCHOOL. — HIS  
WATER EXCURSIONS, THE ORIGIN OF MOST OF HIS SUBSE-  
QUENT SUFFERING.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, the subject of this memoir, was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, the 21st October, 1772. His father, the Rev. John Coleridge, was vicar of Ottery, and head master of Henry VIII Free Grammar School, usually termed the King's School; a man of great learning, and one of the persons who assisted Dr. Kennicott in his Hebrew Bible. Before his appointment to the school at Ottery he had been head master of the school at South Molton. Some dissertations on the 17th and 18th chapters of the Book of Judges, [1] and a Latin grammar for the use of the school at Ottery were published by him. He was an exceedingly studious

man, pious, of primitive manners, and of the most simple habits: passing events were little heeded by him, and therefore he was usually characterized as the "absent man".

Many traditional stories concerning his father had been in circulation for years before Coleridge came to Highgate. These were related with mirth in the neighbourhood of Ottery, and varied according to the humour of the narrator.

To beguile the winter's hour, which, however, was never dull in his society, he would recall to memory the past anecdotes of his father, and repeat them till the tears ran down his face, from the fond recollection of his beloved parent. The relation of the story usually terminated with an affectionate sigh, and the observation, "Yes, my friend, he was indeed an Israelite without guile, and might be compared to Parson Adams." The same appellation which Coleridge applied to his father will also, with equal justice, be descriptive of himself. In many respects he "differed in kind" from his brothers and the rest of his family, but his resemblance to his father was so strong, that I shall continue this part of the memoir with a sketch of the parent stock from which he sprung.

The Rev. John Coleridge had been twice married; his second wife, Anne Bowdon, by whom he had a large family, was the mother of my friend, and seems to have been peculiarly fitted for the wife of a clergyman who had a large family and limited means. Her husband, not possessing that knowledge usually termed worldly wisdom, she appeared to supply the place of the friend, which such a man required in his wife. He was better fitted for the apostolic age, so primitive was he in his manners and uneducated in the fashions and changing customs surrounding him: his companions were chiefly his books, and the few scholars he had to educate. To all around him he was extremely kind and amiable, and greatly beloved by the flock over whom he presided as pastor. For each individual, whatever his rank, he had a kindly word of greeting, and in sickness or distress he was an attentive friend. His richer and more educated neighbours visited him, and shared the general pleasure and amusement excited by his simple and peculiarly absent manners.

It is said of him, that on one occasion, having to breakfast with his bishop, he went, as was the practice of that day, into a barber's shop to have his head shaved, wigs being then in common use. Just as the operation was completed, the clock struck nine, the hour at which the bishop punctually breakfasted. Roused, as from a reverie, he instantly left the barber's shop, and in his haste forgetting his wig, appeared at the breakfast table, where the bishop and his party had assembled. The bishop, well acquainted with his absent manners, courteously and playfully requested him to walk into an adjoining room, and give his opinion of a mirror which had arrived from London a few days previously, and which disclosed to his astonished guest the consequences of his haste and forgetfulness.

On another occasion he dined with the bishop, who had great pleasure and delight in his society, when the following ludicrous scene took place. The bishop had a maiden daughter, past the meridian of life, who was always glad to see and converse with the "dear good old man" (his usual appellation), and who was also kind enough to remind him of his little 'Forgets' in society, and rouse him from his absent moods. It not being the fashion in his day for gentlemen to wear braces, his small-clothes, receding from his waistcoat, left a space in his black dress, through which often appeared a portion of his linen. On these occasions, the good lady would draw his attention to this appearance, by saying in an under tone, "A little to this side, Mr. Coleridge," or to that, as the adjustment might require. This hint was as instantly attended to as his embarrassed manner, produced by a sense of the kindness, would permit. On the day above alluded to, his kind friend sat next to him, dressed, as was then the fashion, in a smart party-going muslin apron. Whilst in earnest conversation with his opposite neighbour, on the side next the lady appeared the folds of his shirt, through the hiatus before described, so conspicuously as instantly to attract her notice. The hint was immediately given: "Mr. Coleridge, a little on the side next me;"—and was as instantly acknowledged by the usual reply, "Thank you, ma'am, thank you," and the hand set to work to replace the shirt; but unfortunately, in his nervous eagerness, he seized on the lady's apron, and appropriated the greater part of it. The appeal of "Dear Mr. Coleridge, do stop!" only increased his embarrassment, and also his exertions to dispose, as he thought, of his shirt; till the

lady, to put a stop to the titter of the visitors, and relieve her own confusion, untied the strings, and thus disengaging herself, left the room, and her friend in possession of her apron. [2]

Mrs. Coleridge, the mother of my friend, and of whom I have already spoken, had naturally a strong mind. She was an uneducated woman, industriously attentive to her household duties, and devoted to the care of her husband and family. Possessing none, even of the most common female accomplishments of her day, she had neither love nor sympathy for the display of them in others. She disliked, as she would say, "your harpsichord ladies," and strongly tried to impress on her sons their little value, in their choice of wives. As a clergyman's wife her conduct was exemplary; the father of my friend had a fortune in such a woman, and she found in him, with all his peculiarities, a kind, sweet tempered, engaging husband. She was, I should add, a very good woman, though like Martha, over careful in many things, very ambitious for the advancement of her sons in life, but wanting perhaps that flow of heart which her husband possessed so largely. But "imperfection cleaves to mortality." Such, as given in this brief sketch, were the parents of the subject of this memoir. [3]

I have heard Coleridge relate the following anecdote of his father. The old gentleman had to take a short journey on some professional business, which would detain him from home for three or four days: his good wife, in her care and watchfulness, had packed a few things in a small trunk, and gave them in charge to her husband, with strong injunctions that he was to put on a clean shirt every day. On his return home, his wife went to search for his linen, when, to her dismay, it was not in the trunk. A closer search, however, discovered that the vicar had strictly obeyed her injunctions, and had put on daily a clean shirt, but had forgotten to remove the one underneath. This might have been the pleasantest and most portable mode of carrying half a dozen shirts in winter, but not so in the dog-days.

As a preacher, he was peculiar: it is said, that the poor idolized, and looked upon him with great reverence; and when death removed this distinguished and eminent scholar from among them, his successor had little chance of pleasing to the same extent. In

their great admiration of him, they would often say, "How fine he was in his discourse, for he gave us the very words the spirit spoke in," viz. the Hebrew, with which he frequently indulged them in his sermons, and which seems greatly to have attracted the notice of the agricultural population, who flocked from the neighbourhood, to the town in which he resided. Excited and stimulated by curiosity, this class of persons might attend the church, and in listening for the Hebrew they would perhaps be more attentive, and carry away some useful portions of the English from this amiable and accomplished pastor.

As a schoolmaster his singularities were of the same character, manifesting the same simplicity and honesty of purpose. I have before stated that he wrote a Latin Grammar for the use of his school, and instead of the word *ablative*, in general use, he compounded three or four Latin words [4] as explanatory of this case. Whether the mothers were startled at the repetition of these words, and thought of the hardships their sons would have to endure in the acquirement of this grammar, I can only conjecture; but it seems he thought it his duty to explain to the ladies, in justice to their feelings, his learned reasons for the alteration he had made in the name of this case.

I had often pressed him to write some account of his early life, and of the various circumstances connected with it. But the aversion he had to read or write any thing about himself was so great, that I never succeeded, except in obtaining a few notes, rather than a detailed account. There would be little either useful or interesting in any account of Coleridge's life, which a stranger to him could give; therefore, from the best authorities with which I am acquainted, and from an intimacy of nearly twenty years, is this memoir of my late lamented friend compiled. He commences one of the notes above alluded to, with his early childhood.

"I was," says he, "the last child, the youngest child of ten by the same mother, that is to say, John, William (who died in infancy), James, William, Edward, George, Luke, Ann, Francis, and myself, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, beneficially abridged Esteese [Greek: *estaesae*], i.e. S. T. C., and the thirteenth, taking in three sisters by my dear father's first wife, — Mary, af-

terwards Mrs. Bradley, — Sarah, who married a seaman and is lately dead, and Elizabeth, afterwards Mrs. Phillips — who alone was bred up with us after my birth, and whom alone of the three I was wont to think of as a sister, though not exactly, yet I did not know why, the same sort of sister, as my sister Nancy.

Being the youngest child, I possibly inherited the weakly state of health of my father, who died at the age of 62, before I had reached my seventh year; and from certain jealousies of old Molly, my brother Frank's dotingly fond nurse, (and if ever child by beauty and loveliness deserved to be doted on, my brother Francis was that child,) and by the infusions of her jealousy into my brother's mind, I was in earliest childhood huffed away from the enjoyments of muscular activity from play, to take refuge at my mother's side, on my little stool, to read my little book, and to listen to the talk of my elders. I was driven from life in motion, to life in thought and sensation. I never played except by myself, and then only acting over what I had been reading or fancying, or half one, half the other, with a stick cutting down weeds and nettles, as one of the seven champions of Christendom. [5] Alas! I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child. I forget whether it was in my fifth or sixth year, but I believe the latter, in consequence of some quarrel between me and my brother, in the first week in October, I ran away from fear of being whipped, and passed the whole night, a night of rain and storm, on the bleak side of a hill on the Otter, and was there found at daybreak, without the power of using my limbs, about six yards from the naked bank of the river."

"In my seventh year, about the same time, if not the very same time, i.e. Oct. 4th, my most dear, most revered father, died suddenly. O that I might so pass away, if like him I were an Israelite without guile. The image of my father, my revered, kind, learned, simple-hearted father is a religion to me!"

Judge Buller who had been educated by his father, had always promised to adopt the son, at least to educate him, foreseeing that Samuel, the youngest, was likely to be left an orphan early in life. Soon after the death of the Rev. John Coleridge, the Judge obtained from John Way, Esq., one of the governors of Christ's Hospital, a presentation to that school, and young Coleridge was sent by the Judge and placed there on the 18th July, 1782. "O! what a change!" [6] he goes on in the note above quoted.

"Depressed, moping, friendless, poor orphan, half starved; (at that time the portion of food to the Bluecoats was cruelly insufficient for those who had no friends to supply them)."

In the late Mr. Charles Lamb's "Works" published in 1818, there is an account of the school, entitled "Recollections of Christ's Hospital." In 1823 there is a second essay on the same subject by Lamb, under the assumed title of "Elia,"—Elia supposed to be intimate with Lamb and Coleridge. This second account, entitled "Christ's Hospital five-and-thirty years ago," gave umbrage to some of the "Blues," as they termed themselves, as differing so much from the first in full praise of this valuable foundation, and particularly as a school from which he had benefited so much. In the preface to the second series, Elia says,

"What he (Elia) tells of himself is often true only (historically) of another; when under the first person he shadows forth the forlorn state of a country boy placed at a London school far from his friends and connexions,"

which is in direct opposition to Lamb's own early history. The second account, under the personification of Elia, is drawn from the painful recollections and sufferings of Coleridge while at school, which I have often heard him relate.

Lamb told Coleridge one day that the friendless school boy in his "Elia," (soon after its publication) was intended for him, and taken from his description of the Blue-coat school. After Coleridge's death, Lamb related the same circumstance to me, that he had drawn the account from Coleridge's feelings, sufferings, &c., Lamb having himself been an indulged boy and peculiarly favoured through the instrumentality of a friend:

"I remember," says Elia, "Lamb at school, and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. His friends lived in town and were at hand, and he had the privilege of going to see them almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction which was denied to us. The present treasurer of the Inner Temple can explain how it happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in the morning, while we were battenning upon our quarter of penny loaf—our 'crug' moistened with attenuated small beer in wooden piggins, smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. On Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease-soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of 'extraordinary bread and butter,' from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant—(we had three banyan to four meat-days in the week)—was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined, and a smack of ginger, (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our 'half-pickled' Sundays, or 'quite fresh' boiled beef on Thursdays, (strong as caro equina), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth—our scanty mutton crags on Fridays—and rather more savoury, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion) he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen.

"I (Coleridge) was a poor friendless boy, my parents, and those who should have cared for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of their's, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates—O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I

used to have towards it in those unfledged years! How in my dreams would my native town come back (far in the west) with its churches and trees and faces! To this late hour of my life, and even to the end of it did Coleridge trace impressions left by the painful recollection of these friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring with them a gloom from the haunting memory of those 'whole day's leave', when by some strange arrangement, we were turned out for the live-long day, upon our own hands whether we had friends to go to or none. I remember those bathing excursions to the New River, which Lamb recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can—for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not care for such water-parties. How we would sally forth into the fields; and strip under the first warmth of the sun; and wanton like young dace in the streams; getting appetites for the noon; which those of us that were penny less (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying—while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings; the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty setting a keener edge upon them! How faint and languid, finally, we would return toward nightfall to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of uneasy liberty had expired.

"It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless; shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty times repeated visit (where our individual faces would be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the lions in the Tower, to whose levee, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive right of admission."

In short, nearly the whole of this essay of Elia's is a transcript of Coleridge's account of the school. 'Never was a friend or schoolfellow more fondly attached to another than Lamb to Coleridge. The latter from his own account, as well as from Lamb and others who knew him when at school, must have been a delicate and suffering boy. His principal ailments he owed much to the state of his stom-

ach, which was at that time so delicate, that when compelled to go to a large closet (shoe-bin, its school name,) containing shoes, to pick out a pair easy to his feet, which were always tender, and he required shoes so large that he could walk in them, rather than with them, and the smell, from the number in this place, used to make him so sick, that I have often seen him shudder, even in late life, when he gave an account of it. In this note, continuing an account of himself at school, he says,

"From eight to fourteen I was a playless day-dreamer, a 'helluo librorum', my appetite for which was indulged by a singular incident: a stranger, who was struck by my conversation, made me free of a circulating library in King Street, Cheapside."

The incident, indeed, was singular: going down the Strand, in one of his day-dreams, fancying himself swimming across the Hellespont, thrusting his hands before him as in the act of swimming, his hand came in contact with a gentleman's pocket; the gentleman seized his hand, turning round and looking at him with some anger, "What! so young, and so wicked?" at the same time accused him of an attempt to pick his pocket; the frightened boy sobbed out his denial of the intention, and explained to him how he thought himself Leander, swimming across the Hellespont. The gentleman was so struck and delighted with the novelty of the thing, and with the simplicity and intelligence of the boy, that he subscribed, as before stated, to the library, in consequence of which Coleridge was further enabled to indulge his love of reading.

In his bathing excursions he had greatly injured his health, and reduced his strength; in one of these bathing exploits he swam across the New River in his clothes, and dried them in the fields on his back: from these excursions commenced those bodily sufferings which embittered the rest of his life, and rendered it truly one of sickness and suffering. When a boy he had a remarkably delicate, white skin, which was once the cause of great punishment to him.

His dame had undertaken to cure him of the itch, with which the boys of his ward had suffered much; but Coleridge was doomed to suffer more than his comrades, from the use of sulphur ointment, through the great sagacity of his dame, who with her extraordinary