

# LIFE OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

A.D. 1772-1834.

---

The Coleridge\* family, for reasons which do credit to the fineness of their feelings, have never deemed it wise to place at the disposal of the public the biographical material they possess, and the consequence is that no full life of this great man has yet been written. The results of their reticence and caution have been both good and bad. If, on the one hand, a prurient public has not, as in some instances, been permitted to

"Peer,  
Spy, smirk, scoff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl, and sneer,"

on the other, the compiler of a biographical notice is reduced to the necessity of filling up important gaps by inference and conjecture.

The chief reason for studying the lives of great men is to gain insight into their characters. Character is formed in youth and is the result of the development and repression of inherited tendencies and aptitudes under the moulding influences of training and surroundings. The source of his great powers has not in the case of Coleridge, any more than in that of most other men of genius, been satisfactorily traced; but the records of his family since his time attest a tendency to produce men of conspicuous ability, of which the present Lord Chief Justice of England is a living example. The name Coleridge, according to De Quincy, has been immemorially associated with the South of Devonshire. Before the poet's time, however, it had not been borne by any famous man.

He was born on the 21st of October, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary in Devonshire, and was the youngest of his father's thirteen and his mother's ten children. His father, the Rev. John Coleridge, was vicar of Ottery St. Mary and headmaster of Henry VIII's Free Grammar School in that town. He had been educated at Cambridge, and "was a country clergyman and schoolmaster of no ordinary kind. He was

---

\* The pronunciation of this name is indicated by Coleridge himself in the following couplet:

"Could you stand upon Skiddaw, you would not from its whole ridge  
See a man who so loves you as your fond S. T. Coleridge."