

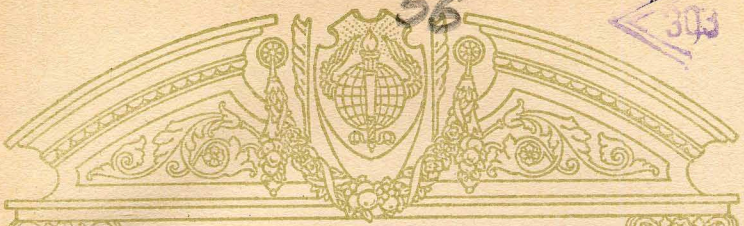


Coleridge

56 *As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."*

— "Ancient Mariner"

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Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

BORN in Devonshire in 1772, the son of a vicar, Coleridge's childhood was spent in one of the loveliest sections of England, and in a typical English home. In 1782 he entered the famous London school, Christ's Hospital, better known as the Blue Coat School, where he had the companionship of Charles Lamb. In 1791 he entered Jesus College, Cambridge; enlisted in a regiment of dragoons, was released after much trouble; became acquainted with Southey, whose loyal and patient friendship was invaluable to him in later years; left the university without taking a degree, and was married the following year. The story of his life is confused and complex; it is sufficient to recall his studies in Germany and travels in Italy; his intimacy with the Wordsworths, his surrender to the opium habit, his separation from his family, his wanderings and irregular life, largely supported by generous friends who recognized his rare gifts; his embarrassments, his sufferings of mind and body, his struggles and his extraordinary though fitful and disconnected productivity. He died in 1834.

As a poet Coleridge had unique gifts, and his few successful poems hold a place by themselves. They were written in his early manhood, when his powers were at their highest and his confidence in himself was still unbroken.