

Mary Elizabeth Coleridge

British writer Mary Coleridge was well known in her day as a novelist and essayist; now, she is better known for her poetry. The great-grandniece of Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the daughter of musically talented parents, Coleridge grew up in a literary and artistic environment. As a child, she read widely and well, and at 13 wrote her first poem, characteristically (as it turned out), about death. She traveled each year to the Continent, and by 19 knew German, French, Italian, and Hebrew; later, she learned Greek and Latin. When she was only 20 years old, she was publishing essays in several periodicals. She lived with her parents for her entire life and she never married. Coleridge also taught grammar and literature to young women, first at her home and then, from 1895 on, at Working Women's College, as part of her belief that it was her Christian duty to help the poor.