The Argyll Baths Portrait of Coleridge

Morton D. Paley

IN 1832 MOSES HAUGHTON (1774 - 1848) painted a portrait of Samuel Taylor Coleridge for Jonathan Green MD. Now at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, this picture is number 23 in my *Portraits of Coleridge* and is discussed (pp. 90-97) and reproduced (frontispiece) there. At some later time afterward. a copy was taken by an unknown artist of Haughton's original. Known as the "Argyll Baths Portrait," because it is associated with Coleridge's taking the hot air baths under Dr. Green's direction at Dr. Robert J. Culverwell's establishment at 10 Arygll Place (near Great Marlborough Street), this picture, once owned by Dr. Joseph Henry Green and now at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas, is no. 10 in my catalogue, and is briefly discussed in *Portraits of Coleridge* (pp. 96-97). It is the only extant portrait of Coleridge that I was unable to see before completing my book, and as I have now had an opportunity to study it, a few words may be added to what I wrote.

In preparing *Portraits of Coleridge*, I tried to visit all locations where I had reason to believe there were original portraits. The cooperation I received is attested by the dedication of my book: "To the owners of the portraits, public and private, whose generous co-operation has made this book possible." However, after I asked to see the Argyll Baths Portrait at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas, the Center replied that it did not own the picture. As I knew that it did, having had reliable information from a member of the Coleridge family, I urged the Center to look again, but received the same reply. To help the librarians there identify the picture, I let them know that it is reproduced as the frontispiece to *Coleridge As a Philosopher* by John H. Muirhead (New York: Macmillan, 1930), but I received the reply that the Center's copy of the book had no frontispiece. In my next message, I said that I was writing with a copy of the book opened to the frontispiece before me. A librarian then looked at the copy in University of Texas Library's stack, but reported that he found no frontispiece! (This is a remarkable coincidence, but I suppose no more remarkable than the Haughton original's having been owned by a doctor named Green and its copy by another doctor named Green.) Subsequently, I received a message from the HRC that the portrait had been found! It was, unfortunately, too late for me to arrange another trip to Austin, and I had to work from a photograph that the Center kindly sent me, and from E. H. Coleridge's notes, transcribed on a previous visit to the Center.

I have now had an opportunity to study the Argyll Baths Portrait at the HRC, and would like to add a few details to what I wrote about it previously. The painting is, as I knew, very large: 35 inches high, according to my measurement, and 27 1/2 inches wide. In monochrome reproduction the background looks black, as it does in Haughton's original, but in actuality it is red, contrasting sharply with the subject's black coat, white hair and white

cravat. A white cuff, just a smidgin of which can be seen in the original, is visible at his wrist. Curiously, the eyes, blue in Haughton's portrait, are hazel in color, though described by EHC as "bluish-gray" (see *Portraits*, p. 96). The wide range of eye colors displayed in Coleridge's portraits is remarkable, but we do not know whether the anonymous artist ever saw Coleridge himself.)

The shoulders are unconvincingly broad, and pentimenti at the viewer's left and (especially) right show that they were originally even broader. Coleridge's right elbow rests on the brown arm of an otherwise invisible chair, not present in the original. The entire drawing has no sense of contour, and so gives an entirely flat effect. In my view, the artist was an amateur who copied Jonathan Green's original for Joseph Henry Green, the original owner of the 'Argyll Baths Portrait.'