Mary (May) French Sheldon Encyclopedia Article

Mary (May) French Sheldon

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Mary (May) French Sheldon

1847-1936

American explorer, publisher, and author who was one of the first European women to explore the African interior. Sheldon, born to a wealthy family and educated in Europe, founded a London publishing house before marrying Eli Sheldon, a fellow publisher, in 1876. She left him behind to explore Africa. Sheldon narrated her travels in articles and her book *Sultan to Sultan* (1892), focusing on the women and children in the territories she visited, a notable difference from her contemporaries. Her writing made significant contributions to both ethnology and geography.