

**HOW SORROW WAS CHANGED
INTO SYMPATHY: WORDS
OF CHEER FOR MOTHERS
BEREFT OF LITTLE CHILDREN**

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How Sorrow Was Changed into Sympathy: Words of Cheer for Mothers Bereft of Little Children by Elizabeth Prentiss

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ELIZABETH PRENTISS

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HOW SORROW WAS CHANGED
INTO SYMPATHY.

WORDS OF CHEER FOR MOTHERS

BEREFT OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

OUT OF THE LIFE OF

MRS. PRENTISS,

Author of the "Sisy Books," etc.

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th ST.



1887

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This volume contains the story of Eddy and Bessie, written by MRS. PRENTISS shortly after their death and passages from which were given in her memoir, verses relating chiefly to the loss of these children, a few of her letters to bereaved friends, and some thoughts by the editor on the death of infants. The most of it is now printed for the first time. The work is designed specially for mothers who mourn the loss of young children. And may it please God to comfort every one of them who shall read it, with His own peace!

G. L. P.

NEW YORK, February, 1884.

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THE DEATH OF LITTLE CHILDREN IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH.

VARIOUS estimates have been *Infant mor-*
formed as to the proportion *tality.*
of mankind that die in infancy; some
making it more than a third, others not
less than one-half. Such estimates are,
of course, largely guesswork. The pro-
portion has differed at different peri-
ods and among different tribes and na-
tions. The wide prevalence of infanticide,
as in India and China, for example, has
greatly increased it; and so have other
criminal practices, both in heathendom
and Christendom. But irrespective of such
special causes, it is certain that a vast num-
ber of the human race have died, and still
die, in early childhood. Little graves
abound in every place of burial. There

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are comparatively few households out of which no infant bier was ever carried. How many have been bereft of all their children! The humane spirit of modern society, aided by medical skill and sanitary science, has done much to reduce the scale of infant mortality; but it is still large enough to cast a dark shadow over the face of existence. It suggests a problem full of perplexity, and which science and philosophy seem alike unable, or unwilling, to grapple with.

Death of infants as a natural event. Its hopelessness.

Viewed solely as a natural event, it is true, the death of little children, however grievous, is yet of a piece with the general course of the world. By no choice of their own they are thrust upon this earthly stage of being and forced to take their chance in the bitter struggle of life. It is no more strange, perhaps, that they so often succumb than that so many spring blossoms drop off and perish. Nature cares as

little for young children as for young animals or plants. Nor is the death of infants at all more strange than that of boys and girls, or of young men and maidens. In either case death is full of anguish and disappointment. It is, too, so inexorable, the blow it deals is so stunning, that we have no will to resist, and can only express our amazement in groans and tears, or else in the dead silence of grief.

But if we view the death of little children on its moral side, the case is wholly altered.

The death of infants as a Providential event.

For here we have to do—not with blind chance or with inexorable physical law, but with the ruling hand of God, the Father Almighty. His providence embraces all events, both great and small, which affect human destiny. It would be as atheistic to say that without Him an infant leaves the world, as to say that without Him it came into the world. This is, indeed, a truth hard to believe, both be-

cause it lies so entirely beyond the sphere of sense, and because it is so sublime and consoling. Some things seem almost too good to be true; and this is one of them. For what is implied in our saying that the death of an infant is a Providential event? It is implied that an infant has an immortal soul and is a special object of God's care and interest. In a certain sense, to be sure, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and even the lilies of the field, are objects of the Divine care. But not as spiritual beings; not as made in God's image; not as capable of knowing and loving Him and of enjoying Him forever. It is in this peculiar sense that He cares for little children. He is their Father in heaven, and His love for them is infinitely more tender than that felt by their earthly parents. On the ground of this great love rests the belief, so unspeakably comforting, that if early taken out of the world, they do not perish, but inherit everlasting life.