

Whatever the character of individuals may be, however possible it is for any to acquire a fitness for a higher sphere, (and that, as we believe, is pre-eminently possible now through Christ)—still, *all* die, and, as a general rule, under the like circumstances of pain and suffering, and very generally, too, with similar feelings to themselves and to survivors. There is not such a difference between the death-beds of the religious and the worldly, except in particular cases, as some may suppose; and there is always that ignorance in relation to the dead, which makes it possible to the living to hope. So far, therefore, as all the *circumstantial*s of death are concerned,—the precursors and attendants and immediate results, disease, pain, dissolution, corruption,—which in all ages have constituted topics of pathetic discourse, or subjects for odes and songs of lamentation,—so far as these are concerned, they are the benevolent products of a modifying law, with which God in his goodness has softened the rigour of the original infliction.

The same principle applies to *premature* death. All of you can see, that a general law, terminating life in all cases on a precise day, would be painful and intolerable; it would poison life from first to last, and it might provoke and exasperate license and lust. It is important both for happiness and virtue that no one should know when he is to die. This object, however, can only be secured by death happening at every moment throughout the entire period allotted to man;—extreme cases, even, such as death before leaving the spring-head and fountain of life, and death being delayed beyond all known or ordinary instances,—these are alike the working out of the same law. To secure, then, the proposed object,—to place humanity under the most gracious and benevolent constitution of things at all *possible* now;—in order that men might so live as to *enjoy* life, because happily ignorant respecting its termination,—on this account it is, that infants and children die; that youths and maidens die; that the young man splendidly endowed, the young woman beautiful and accomplished, die; the bride in her day of tremulous delight, the mother in the hour of her new joy, the strong man in the glory of his strength,—on this account they die. They die,—that *all who live* may live on under the blessed consciousness that they know not when *they* are to die. The whole race reaps the benefit of premature mortality. The glow and brightness of all life, is connected with the graves and sepulchres of the young. Those who die early, or in the midst of their days, enjoy the advantage while they live. But the law would be infringed, and would be contradictory and unnatural, if *parents* were to be *sure* that no child could possibly die till it was a day old, or a month, or a year, or two years, or ten;—to be thoroughly kind, the law must be carried out to its farthest extent, and come into play from the very first moment of possible vitality. Hence it is that infants die;—they die through the working of a most benevolent secondary law, brought in to break the rigour of the first! And they die *for the benefit of the race*. Their lives are taken, for the sake of securing the happiness of the world. I had almost said,—and I may say it as speaking in a figure,—that a babe in its coffin may be supposed to look, to its weeping parents, like a little “dead Christ!” It has died vicariously,—to secure a temporal advantage for the world, even as Christ died vicariously to secure for it a spiritual redemption. The one dies, that we may not know *when* we shall die; the other died that we *might* know “that our Redeemer liveth.” By the one fact we are enabled to endure life; by the other we are taught to die in hope, and to look forward to the resurrection of the dead. Let a halo of glory, then, seem to encircle that fair brow,—the brow of that little babe, lying cold and dead there, on the lap of its mother! Poor mother! thy sorrow is great! Weep away;—let the hot tears gush out;—it is not the time to speak to thee now. But very soon thou wilt come to understand, how, all thy life, thou hast been reaping advantages *that came to thee by the death of the infants of others*; and thou wilt learn to acquiesce in what is really the result of one of the most benevolent of God’s arrangements. The death of thy child, *as a human being*, is from sin; but his death *as a child* is, because he is one of the chosen of the race, whose lot and mission are not to live to *do* and to *enjoy*, but simply to die,—but to die for the benefit of the whole species, the world over!—“*A Thought for the Thoughtful*,” a tract, by T. Binney.