

In her 1964 book, Stories of the Christian Hymns, Helen Salem Rizk wrote this about Fanny J. Crosby, who lived from 1820 to 1915.

If ever a hymn writer used a theme which was indicative of his or her life, it was blind Fanny Crosby when she wrote, in 1868, "Pass Me Not, O Gentile Savior." Of a truth, God certainly did not pass her by. She turned a tragedy at six weeks of age into a triumph of a lifetime. She overcame a terrible, personal adversity and contributed a life of power and purpose to the world. Fanny Jane Crosby was a little baby girl of six weeks, in May 1820, when she caught a common cold. A country doctor of Putnam County, New York, unwittingly prescribed a hot mustard poultice. She was blinded for life!

When she was five, sympathetic neighbors and friends pooled their money and sent her to a noted New York surgeon, Dr. Valentine Mott. After a careful examination, the specialist said sadly that there was nothing he could do. Looking toward her, he said, "Poor little blind girl!" Fanny Crosby always remembered these words and turned the sympathetic remark of a kindly physician into the purposeful pattern of a truly remarkable personality. That world may have thought of her as the "poor little blind girl," but not Fanny Crosby! She once told a friend that her blindness had proved to be a blessing, because it enabled her to be more alone where the writing of her poetry became easy. And she told another that if she had a choice she still would remain blind, for when she died the first face she would ever see would be the face of her "blessed Savior."