

# **Elizabeth Oakes (Prince) Smith Biography**

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# Biography

Elizabeth Oakes (Prince) Smith (12 August 1806-15 November 1893), popular author and reformer, was born in North Yarmouth, Maine. She was self-educated and wished to pursue a teaching career but, on her mother's wishes, at sixteen she married Seba Smith, a newspaper editor in Portland. Smith managed their family of five sons well and her husband became successful with his humorous "Major Jack Downing Letters." But the Smiths went bankrupt in the panic of 1837 and moved to New York. There, both Smiths wrote for a living: Seba for the dailies; Elizabeth, poetry, sketches, and juveniles. Her *The Sinless Child, and Other Poems* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1843) won praise, including that of Edgar Allan Poe. Smith became a regular contributor to *Godey's Lady Book*, *Graham's Magazine*, and the *Southern Literary Messenger*; published juveniles; wrote plays; and joined the New York literary coterie that included Poe, Horace Greeley, and Margaret Fuller. She became an active reformer and her series on woman's rights in the *New-York Tribune* was published as *Woman and Her Needs* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1851). In 1851 she joined the lyceum circuit to talk on the woman question. Her reform novel, *The Newsboy* (New York: J. C. Derby, 1854), created public interest in the plight of New York's street children. In the 1860s, she published a series of popular novels and, after her husband's death in 1868, retired to Hollywood, North Carolina.