

**'THE GATES AJAR',
CRITICALLY
EXAMINED**

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'The gates ajar', critically examined by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

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ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

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'THE GATES AJAR'

by *E. L. Phelps*

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'THE GATES AJAR'

CRITICALLY EXAMINED.

IF in the present day any person has a favourite scheme, or theory, or doctrine to propound, the most ready mode he can adopt to promote the circulation of his opinions, especially in the religious world, is to write a story-book. It must also, we fear, be a picture-book, or it will not be acceptable, nor suit the superficial taste of the age. An enigmatical or startling title, too, is a fashion-

able qualification, like 'Gates Ajar.' So recommended, it is in a fair way to popular favour.

That this American publication, so entitled, should have obtained a wide circulation even among some religious persons, does not speak well for the discrimination of its readers. It is simply a second-rate sensational novel, professedly of a religious character, but betraying so much positive error, and treating serious subjects in such a flip-pant, unhallowed strain, that no small amount of Christian charity is required to avoid the conclusion, that 'an enemy hath done this!'

The argument of this book, underlying its narrative and divested of its

drapery, appears to be this :—That the ordinary received opinions of the final happiness of the blessed are vague, cold, and unsatisfactory ; that the hopes and prospects of future glory which have sustained and comforted the departing saints ever since Christ came, are vapid, unsubstantial, unreal ;—that they are actually offensive to the bereaved heart ; utterly insufficient to supply the place of loved ones departed ; leaving the sufferer stunned and prostrate, and refusing to be comforted ; and that, considered generally, the orthodox views of heaven present nothing real, substantial, and captivating to the expectant minds of men.

To remedy this error it is suggested

that the condition of our future eternal happiness should be clothed with the garb of our present state and nature—perpetuating and intensifying our human affections. Mourners are to be comforted, not by the application of scriptural promises, not by a realising sense of the love of Christ in chastening them,—nor are they taught to kiss the hand that afflicts them, raising their sorrowing souls from the fading things of earth to those of heaven,—but by turning heaven into earth, materialising, humanising, rationalising heaven, so as to make a spiritual state palatable to the natural man. Heaven is to be rendered attractive to children, by assuring them that they will find new