

BEYOND THE GATES

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Beyond the Gates by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

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ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

**BEYOND
THE GATES**

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BY

wrs.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS,

Ward

AUTHOR OF "THE GATES Ajar," "THE STORY OF AVIS," ETC., ETC.

Twenty-Second Thousand.



BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.

1885.

TO MY BROTHER,

STUART,

WHO PASSED BEYOND, AUGUST 20, 1888.

NOTE.

It should be said, that, at the time of the departure of him to whose memory this little book is consecrated, the work was already in press; and that these pages owe more to his criticism than can be acknowledged here.

E. S. P.

GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
September, 1888.

BEYOND THE GATES.



I

I HAD been ill for several weeks with what they called brain fever. The events which I am about to relate happened on the fifteenth day of my illness.

Before beginning to tell my story, it may not be out of place to say a few words about myself, in order to clarify to the imagination of the reader points which would otherwise involve numerous explanatory digressions, more than commonly misplaced in a tale dealing with the materials of this.

I am a woman forty years of age. My father was a clergyman; he had been many years dead. I was living, at the time I refer to, in my mother's house in a factory town in Massachusetts. The town need not be more

particularly mentioned, nor genuine family names given, for obvious reasons. I was the oldest of four children; one of my sisters was married, one was at home with us, and there was a boy at college.

I was an unmarried, but not an unhappy woman. I had reached a very busy, and sometimes I hoped a not altogether valueless, middle age. I had used life and loved it. Beyond the idle impulse of a weary moment, which signifies no more than the reflex action of a mental muscle, and which I had been in the habit of rating accordingly, I had never wished to die. I was well, vigorous, and active. I was not of a dependent or a despondent temperament.

I am not writing an autobiography, and these things, not of importance in themselves, require only the briefest allusion. They will serve to explain the general cast of my life, which in turn may define the features of my story.

There are two kinds of solitary: he who is drawn by the inward, and he who chooses the

outward life. To this latter class I had belonged. Circumstances, which it is not necessary to detail here, had thrust me into the one as a means of self-preservation from the other, while I was yet quite young.

I had been occupied more largely with the experiences of other people than with my own. I had been in the habit of being depended upon. It had been my great good fortune to be able to spend a part of my time among the sick, the miserable, and the poor. It had been, perhaps, my better chance to be obliged to balance the emotional perils of such occupations by those of a different character. My business was that of a school-teacher, but I had traveled somewhat; I had served as a nurse during the latter years of the war; in the Sanitary Commission; upon the Freedmen's Bureau; as an officer in a Woman's Prison, and had done a little work for the State Bureau of Labor among the factory operatives of our own town. I had therefore, it will be seen, been spared the deterioration of a monotonous existence. At the time I was taken ill I was

managing a private school, rather large for the corps of assistants which I could command, and had overworked. I had been at home, thus employed, with my mother who needed me, for two years.

It may not be unsuitable, before proceeding with my narrative, to say that I had been a believer in the truths of the Christian religion; not, however, a devotee. I had not the ecstatic temperament, and was not known among my friends for any higher order of piety than that which is implied in trying to do one's duty for Christ's sake, and saying little about it or Him, — less than I wish I had sometimes. It was natural to me to speak in other ways than by words; that does not prove that it was best. I had read a little, like all thinking people with any intellectual margin to their lives, of the religious controversies of the day, and had not been without my share of pressure from the fashionable reluctance to believe. Possibly this had affected a temperament not too much inclined towards the supernatural, but it had never conquered my