

**THE GATES AJAR**

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The Gates Ajar by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

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**ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS**

**THE GATES AJAR**



# THE GATES AJAR.

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

"Splendor! Immensity! Eternity! Grand words! Great things!  
A little definite happiness would be more to the purpose."

MADAME DE GASPARIN

BOSTON:  
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To my father, whose life, like a perfume from beyond the Gates, penetrates every life which approaches it, the readers of this little book will owe whatever pleasant thing they may find within its pages.

E. S. P.

ANDOVER, October 22, 1888.





## THE GATES AJAR.

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### I.

ONE week; only one week to-day, this twenty-first of February.

I have been sitting here in the dark and thinking about it, till it seems so horribly long and so horribly short; it has been such a week to live through, and it is such a small part of the weeks that must be lived through, that I could think no longer, but lighted my lamp and opened my desk to find something to do.

I was tossing my paper about, — only my own: the packages in the yellow envelopes I have not been quite brave enough to open yet, — when I came across this poor little book in which I used to keep memoranda of the weather, and my lovers, when I was a school-girl. I turned the leaves, smiling to see how many blank pages were left, and took up my pen, and now I am not smiling any more.

If it had not come exactly as it did, it seems to me as if I could bear it better. They tell

me that it should not have been such a shock. "Your brother had been in the army so long that you should have been prepared for anything. Everybody knows by what a hair a soldier's life is always hanging," and a great deal more that I am afraid I have not listened to. I suppose it is all true; but that never makes it any easier.

The house feels like a prison. I walk up and down and wonder that I ever called it home. Something is the matter with the sunsets; they come and go, and I do not notice them. Something kills the voices of the children, snowballing down the street; all the music has gone out of them, and they hurt me like knives. The harmless, happy children!—and Roy loved the little children.

Why, it seems to me as if the world were spinning around in the light and wind and laughter, and God just stretched down His hand one morning and put it out.

It was such a dear, pleasant world to be put out!

It was never dearer or more pleasant than it was on that morning. I had not been as happy for weeks. I came up from the Post-Office singing to myself. His letter was so bright

and full of mischief! I had not had one like it all the winter. I have laid it away by itself, filled with his jokes and pet names, "Mamie" or "Queen Mamie" every other line, and signed  
"Until next time, your happy

"Roy."

I wonder if all brothers and sisters keep up the baby-names as we did. I wonder if I shall ever become used to living without them.

I read the letter over a great many times, and stopped to tell Mrs. Bland the news in it, and wondered what had kept it so long on the way, and wondered if it could be true that he would have a furlough in May. It seemed too good to be true. If I had been fourteen instead of twenty-four, I should have jumped up and down and clapped my hands there in the street. The sky was so bright that I could scarcely turn up my eyes to look at it. The sunshine was shivered into little lances all over the glaring white crust. There was a snow-bird chirping and pecking on the maple-tree as I came in.

I went up and opened my window; sat down by it and drew a long breath, and began to count the days till May. I must have sat there as much as half an hour. I was so happy