

# **THE GATES BETWEEN**

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The Gates Between by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

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**ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS**

**THE  
GATES BETWEEN**



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# THE GATES BETWEEN

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS *Ward*

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things  
which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

REVELATION



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## THE GATES BETWEEN.

## CHAPTER I.

IF the narrative which I am about to recount perplex the reader, it can hardly do so more than it has perplexed the narrator. Explanations, let me say at the start, I have none to offer. That which took place I relate. I have had no special education or experience as a writer; both my nature and my avocation have led me in other directions. I can claim nothing more in the construction of these pages than the qualities of a faithful reporter. Such, I have tried to be.

It was on the twenty-fifth of November of the year 187-, that I, Esmerald Thorne, fell upon the event whose history and consequences I am about to describe.

Autobiographies I do not like. I should



have been positive at any time during my life of forty-nine years that no temptation could drag me over that precipice of presumption and illusion which awaits the man who confides himself to the world. As it is the unexpected which happens, so it is the unwelcome which we choose. I do not tell this story for my own gratification. I tell it to fulfill the heaviest responsibility of my life. However I may present myself upon these pages is the least of my concern ; whether well or ill, that is of the smallest possible consequence. Touching the manner of my telling the story, I have heavy thoughts ; for I know that upon the manner of the telling will depend effects too far beyond the scope of any one human personality for me to regard them indifferently. I wish I could. I have reason to believe myself the bearer of a message to many men. This belief is in itself enough, one would say, to deplete a man of paltry purpose. I wish to be considered only as the messenger, who comes and departs, and is thought of no more. The message remains, and should remain, the only material of interest.

Owing to some peculiarities in the situation, I am unable to delegate, and do not see my way to defer, a duty — for I believe it to be a duty — which I shall therefore proceed to perform with as little apology as possible. I must trust to the gravity of my motive to overcome every trifling consideration in the mind of my readers ; as it has solemnly done in my own.

In order to give force to my narrative, it will be necessary for me to be more personal in some particulars than I could have chosen, and to revert to certain details of my early history belonging to that category which people of my profession or temperament are wont to dismiss as “emotional.” I have had strange occasion to learn that this is a deep and delicate word, which can never be scientifically used, which cannot be so much as elementally understood, except by delicacy and by depth. These are precisely the qualities of which this is to be said, — he who most lacks them will be most unaware of the lack.

There is a further peculiarity about such un-

consciousness ; that it is not material for education. You can teach a man that he is not generous, or true, or able. You can never teach him that he is superficial, or that he is not fine.

I have been by profession a physician ; the son of a chemist ; the grandson of a surgeon ; a man fairly illustrative of the subtler significance of these circumstances ; born and bred, as the children of science are ; — a physical fact in a world of physical facts ; a man who rises, if ever, by miracle, to a higher set of facts ; who thinks the thought of his father, who does the deed of his father's father, who contests the heredity of his mother, who shuts the pressure of his special education like a clasp about his nature, and locks it down with the iron experience of his calling.

It was given to me, as it is not given to all men of my kind, to know a woman strong enough — and sweet enough — to fit a key unto this lock.

Strong enough *or* sweet enough, I should rather have said. The two are truly the same.