

THE RECENT LITERATURE ABOUT HEAVEN.

There has been recently announced for publication in Canada a small work that has had a very large sale in the United States. This little book of some 250 small octavo pages is sent forth under the title of "The Gates Ajar," the author being Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, daughter, we believe, of Professor Phelps, of Andover Theological Seminary. "The Gates Ajar" has not come alone upon the world of letters. Its predecessors, contemporaries and successors have been numerous, and servile imitations of it are likely yet to be legion. The peculiarity of this representative of the class, which causes it to attract so great a share of attention from the religious reading public, is that it pretends to speak from the standpoint of orthodoxy. In taking this stand, Miss Phelps gains a manifest advantage over the more honest and more impious contemners of the Word of God, the Swedenborgian and the modern Spiritualist, who are the authors of most of the current literature that indulges in speculations on the minutiae of a future state. Dr. Holcombe, with his revelations as to the enjoyments of *Our Children in Heaven*, and the relations of *The Sexes here and hereafter*, hardly makes his influence felt upon the Christian world; nor are the many dealers in bare assertion and obscure inference, who follow in his footsteps, more fortunate. These authors are known to lie outside of the pale of Evangelical Christianity, and we know that "in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." It is not so with the author of "The Gates Ajar." She comes before the world under false pretences. Her antecedents, the dedication of her book, the tone of certain parts of it, form, together with the attractions of a somewhat pleasing narrative style, a bait which has been greedily snapped up by many that would have rejected the book with scorn had its real character been rendered more apparent. The general reader is no more a judge of a good or sound book, than the general buyer is of many articles that he purchases. Even supposing him endowed with the powers necessary for forming a correct judgment, he is not disposed to make use of these powers on every occasion. He exercises faith in the persons and things that have once been proved by him, taking for granted that these persons will only furnish him with what he has already found to be good. When, therefore, any one professing to belong to a body in which implicit confidence is placed, publishes opinions at variance with those held by that body, it is not to be wondered at that many should be deceived. Andover, the town where Miss Phelps resides, is the seat of the oldest and best endowed Theological Seminary in the United States. The Congregationalists have, naturally enough, been proud of an institution in which such scholars as Moses Stuart have taught sound doctrine, and which in later times has been presided over by men actuated by a sincere love of truth. In that Seminary the father of the author of "The Gates Ajar," and the person to whom it is dedicated, is a professor. Miss Phelps may say that she is not a professor; still she places herself under the Aegis of Andover Congregationalism, and thence inflicts deep wounds upon the reverence, the spirituality, and the devotion of those whom she could never hope to reach in her real character as a religious free lance.

The object of "The Gates Ajar" is to correct a universally wrong impression that has existed in the minds of people from time immemorial, and now exists, with regard to the state, condition, and occupations of the human inhabitants of Heaven. The author is no doubt right in supposing that the vague, indefinite notions concerning Heaven that pass through the