

**THE DAY OF THEIR
WEDDING.
A NOVEL**

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The Day of Their Wedding. A Novel by W. D. Howells

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W. D. HOWELLS

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"' GET RIGHT IN, LADY '"

THE DAY OF THEIR WEDDING

A Novel

William Dean

W. D. HOWELLS

AUTHOR OF "A HAZARD OF NEW FORTUNES"
"A TRAVELER FROM ALTRURIA" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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Stacks
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President Kadar's Kitchen
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THE DAY OF THEIR WEDDING

I

WHEN the train slowed before drawing into the station at Fitchburg, Sister Althea took up her bag from the floor, and began to collect her paper parcels into her lap, as if she were going to leave the car. Then she sat gripping the bag to her side and staring out into the night, blotched everywhere with the city lights and the railway signals—red and green and orange. From time to time she looked round over her shoulder into the car, up and down the aisle, and again set her face towards the window, and held it so rigidly, to keep herself from turning any more, that it hurt her neck.

The car was a day-coach on a night train,

and most of the few passengers were making preparations for leaving it. An old gentleman in the seat across the aisle, whom she had asked more than once whether the train was sure to stop at Fitchburg, was already buttoned up in a light overcoat, which he had the effect of wearing in compliance with charges against exposing himself to the night air. He sat humming to himself while he held fast an umbrella and a bundle such as one married sister might send to another by their father; it was in several sections of wrapping-paper, and was tied with tape. He leaned over towards Sister Althea, and asked, benevolently, "Was you expecting to meet friends in Fitchburg?"

Sister Althea started and looked round. He repeated the question, and she gasped out, "Nay; I am not expecting friends to meet me." She had framed her reply with a certain mechanical exactness which he seemed to feel.

"Oh! ah! From the Family at Vardley, I presume?"

Sister Althea faltered a moment before she answered, "Yee."

She let her head droop forward a little, and with her Shaker bonnet slanting downward over her deeply hidden face she looked like a toucan, except for the gayety of color with which nature mocks that strange bird's grotesqueness. She was in Shaker drabs as to her prim gown, and her shawl crossed fichu-wise upon her breast; her huge bonnet was covered with a dove-colored satin. To the eye that could not catch a glimpse of her face, or rightly measure her figure as she sat dejected for the moment following her speech, she must have looked little and old.

The friendly person in the seat opposite began humming to himself again. He stood up before the train halted, and he said to Sister Althea, as he turned to leave the car, "Well, I wish you good-evening."

"Good-evening," said Sister Althea, faintly; and now, when the train stopped at last, and the noises of the station began to make