

**MISS BELLARD'S
INSPIRATION;
A NOVEL**

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Miss Bellard's inspiration; a novel by W. D. Howells

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W. D. HOWELLS

**MISS BELLARD'S
INSPIRATION;
A NOVEL**

Miss Bellard's Inspiration

A Novel

By W. D. Howells

Author of

"Letters Home" "Questionable Shapes"
"Literary Friends and Acquaintance"
"Literature and Life" etc.



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Miss Bellard's Inspiration



Miss Bellard's Inspiration

I

Y dear, will you please read that letter again?" Mrs. Crombie said, in tones that might either be those of entreaty for her husband's compliance, or command of his obedience, or appeal to his clearer impression from the confusion which her niece's letter had cast her into. She began in a high, imperative note, and ended in something like an imploring whimper. She had first read the letter herself, and then thrown it across the breakfast-table to Crombie; and as he began to read it to himself she now added, "Aloud!"

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"I don't see any use in that," he said. "There's no mystery about it."

"No mystery, when a girl like Lillias Bellard starts up out of space and asks a thing like that? We might as well sell the place at once. It will be as bad as The Surges before the summer is over; and I did think that if we came and built inland we could have a little peace of our lives." Crombie trivially thought of saying, "Little pieces of our lives," but he did not, and she went on: "If it's going on like this, the mountains will be as bad as the seashore, and there will be nothing left but Europe. Give me that letter, Archibald!"

She recovered it from his wanderingly extended left hand, his right being employed in filling up his cup with the exactly proportioned due of hot milk which he poured so as to make a bead on the surface of the coffee.

"I can't make Lillias out," Mrs. Crombie

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flamed forth again. "She is a sly girl; or at least I have always considered her so."

"It isn't a sly letter," Crombie suggested, impartially.

"No; and that is just it. Anything frank-er, or bolder, even, I've never seen in *my* family." Crombie might have felt the emphasis a blow at his own family, but as he had none except the wife before him, he did not suffer it to alienate his sympathy from her. "If it was anybody but my own sister's child, I should call it brazen. It's a liberty, yes, a liberty, even if I *am* her aunt. She had no right to presume upon our relationship. If the Mellays are not able to receive her now, she might go somewhere else."

"Where?"

"Anywhere!"

"I don't see where. Her people are abroad, and the Mellays' telegram postponing her a week, seems to have caught