

**A FEARFUL
RESPONSIBILITY,
AND OTHER STORIES**

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A Fearful Responsibility, and Other Stories by William D. Howells

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WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

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BY



WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

AUTHOR OF "THE LADY OF THE AEGISBOOR," "THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY," ETC.

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A FEARFUL RESPONSIBILITY.

I.

EVERY loyal American who went abroad during the first years of our great war felt bound to make himself some excuse for turning his back on his country in the hour of her trouble. But when Owen Elmore sailed, no one else seemed to think that he needed excuse. All his friends said it was the best thing for him to do; that he could have leisure and quiet over there, and would be able to go on with his work.

At the risk of giving a farcical effect to my narrative, I am obliged to confess that the work of which Elmore's friends spoke was a projected history of Venice. So many literary Americans have projected such a work that it may now fairly be regarded as a national enterprise. Elmore was too obscure to have been announced in the usual way by the newspapers as having this design; but it was well known in his