

**THE WELLFIELDS: A
NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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The Wellfields: A Novel. In Three Volumes. Vol. II by Jessie Fothergill

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JESSIE FOTHERGILL

**THE WELLFIELDS: A
NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

THE WELLFIELDS.

A Novel.

BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL,

AUTHOR OF 'THE FIRST VIOLIN' AND 'PROBATION.'

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE WELLFIELDS.

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STAGE II—*Continued.*
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CHAPTER VI.

IN DANGER.

'Oh Death, that makest life so sweet !
Oh fear, with mirth before thy feet !'

WHEN Nita and Jerome again arrived at the Abbey, they found that Mr. Bolton had returned from Burnham, and that the midday dinner, which was an institution in the family, was waiting for them.

‘Have you settled anything?—has Nita helped you?’ inquired Mr. Bolton.

‘Miss Bolton has been very kind indeed, and has probably saved me from wasting a great deal of my small stock of money,’ replied Jerome.

‘Ah!’ said Mr. Bolton, appreciatively, ‘that’s always something gained.’

He asked his daughter what she was going to do that afternoon, and Nita said she was going to drive to the town of Clyderhow to do a little shopping.’

‘Why Clyderhow? The shops in Burnham are a great deal better.’

‘Because I like the drive to Clyderhow,’ said Nita; ‘and there is a wonderful milliner there. Aunt Margaret got a bonnet from her with five ostrich tips in it, and a bird, and three bows of black satin ribbon, and a great deal of velvet, for the sum of two guineas.’

‘So you go by the quantity of stuff you get for your money when you choose bonnets?’ asked Mr. Bolton.

‘Aunt Margaret does. She likes plumes.

I thought I might perhaps find something sweetly modest and simple, with one feather and one bow, and a little flower or sprig for instance, for next to nothing.'

'Is this shopping considered a secret service affair?' inquired Jerome; 'or may I go too, if I sit quite still while you are in the shop, and promise not to look that way?'

'I am afraid you would think it a great bore,' said Nita quickly, as her face flushed.

'I suppose it was because I love to bore and afflict myself that I asked permission to go,' he answered, with a smile.

'I shall be most happy to take you if you would really like to go. Will you come too, papa?'

'What an idea!—I hope not!' thought Jerome, within himself, and Mr. Bolton was obliging enough to say:

'I?—no. I never drive in the afternoon. I am going to my Italian, as usual.'

But as the carriage was not ordered to be round until half an hour after dinner, Mr.

Bolton proposed to Jerome that they should take a walk round the garden and have a cigar. Nita watched the two figures as they paced together towards the cloisters. The elder man, with the massive lines, broad, sturdy figure, somewhat below middle height, but still imposing in its power and strength; the somewhat bowed back and high shoulders; the round, bull-dog head, with its expression of dogged determination. The younger—Nita leaned against the side of the window and folded her arms, as she contemplated him with a strange mixture of sensations. What a contrast to that dear familiar figure of the man who was noted for his hardness and coldness to others, but who was so gentle, so tender and indulgent to her, and to the few friends who composed their small circle of intimates—a contrast indeed! The new-comer was—unconsciously she recalled those lines in 'Esther'—

'He was a lovely youth; I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not more fair than he.'

‘The panther in the wilderness!’ That was an evil comparison; surely he was good as well as beautiful. Was it really only yesterday that he had arrived—not yet twenty-four hours ago? And how long would he still be here? And what would the Abbey, everything be, when he was gone? She turned hastily away from the window, and would not venture another look.

The two men paced about the river walk for a time, till Mr. Bolton asked:

‘Do you know any of the people about here?’

‘I met an old acquaintance this morning—Father Somerville, from Brentwood.’

‘Somerville! You know him? Is he any favourite of yours?’

‘As to that, I can hardly say. I like what I have seen of him, but know very little of him. I fancy we have many tastes in common. He is a cultivated man, who has seen the world, I think.’

‘Ay, ay! he’s clever, is Somerville, and