

**THE WELLFIELDS:  
A NOVEL. VOL. III**

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The Wellfields: A Novel. Vol. III by Jessie Fothergill

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**JESSIE FOTHERGILL**

**THE WELLFIELDS:  
A NOVEL. VOL. III**



# THE WELLFIELDS.

A Novel.

BY  
JESSIE FOTHERGILL,  
AUTHOR OF 'THE FIRST VIOLIN' AND 'PROBATION.'

IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.



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## THE WELLFIELDS.

### STAGE IV.

#### CHAPTER I.

A REED SHAKEN IN THE WIND.

**W**ELLFIELD'S position had not been altogether an enviable one, during the last few months. In his letter to Sara, summoning Avice home, he had casually mentioned having had money troubles, and this was true. He had shortly before heard from Mr. Netley, that now that his father's affairs were finally wound up,

nothing would remain to him save three to four hundred pounds, then lying in the bank to his account, representing at most some twenty pounds a year. With this delightful information in his pocket he repaired one day to Burnham as usual, and during the morning had an interview with Mr. Bolton, in which that gentleman, all unconscious of what had happened, offered him the post of foreign correspondent to his house, at a salary of two hundred a year. He was surprised at the manner in which the proposition was received. Wellfield started, and exclaimed,

‘ Mr. Bolton—I—I cannot thank you—you do not know what this is to me.’

With which, leaning his elbows on the table, he covered his face with his hands. In truth, his emotion was almost overpowering ; this event appealed strongly to all the superstitious elements of his nature. Here, when he had just been debating on his way to Burnham whether he should not that very



morning explain his circumstances to Mr. Bolton, and then and there take his leave, leaving a message for Nita, and so cut the Gordian knot which he spent hours daily in futilely attempting to untie—now, at this very moment came the only man who could help him, and proffered him such tangible assistance that, it seemed to his nature, it would be madness to refuse it. A great strain had been put upon his nerves lately. He had expected and feared the news which he had that morning received, but he had waited for it as if paralysed. Now, everything, gratitude, necessity, convenience, pointed out to him that he must remain where he was. It was most improbable that anywhere else he would receive so much money, or be able to find work which he could do competently. Poor, weak and vacillating heart, which recognised honour and truth when it saw them, but which was too weak and vain to lay hold of them and keep them! Surely natures like

his are more to be pitied than any others when their time comes for struggling and deciding—the natures which can see the right, but which *never* perform it, if the wrong offers an easier task at the moment.

Mr. Bolton was naturally surprised. ‘Why, Wellfield,’ he asked, ‘what ails you?’

Jerome lifted his face from his hands, pale and worn, and took the letter from his pocket.

‘If you read that, you will understand what I must feel on receiving your offer,’ he remarked.

‘Ah, indeed! I *do* see,’ said Mr. Bolton, when he had finished it. ‘Yes—well, you need not fret so much about that now. Things don’t look so bad. You have this salary coming in, and something to start with as well.’

‘Yes—it is the feeling of relief, after all this strain which overcame me for the moment,’ he answered; and added, earnestly, ‘Believe

me, Mr. Bolton, I shall never cease to be grateful for the goodness I have received from you and yours, all this time—I, of all others!

He spoke as he felt, and the remembrance of Nita's goodness, and all that it implied—of the miserable entanglement in the background, out of which he could in no way emerge with honour, let the affair terminate as it might—all this brought a mist before his eyes, and a lump into his throat.

'Pooh!' said Mr. Bolton, 'never talk of that. We are not barbarians, to turn a stranger from our doors.'

Jerome went back to Wellfield that afternoon, firmly resolved to write to Sara Ford, and ask her to set him free. When it came to the point, he 'could' not do it. He could picture only too vividly what such a letter would mean to her. It was Saturday afternoon. He would wait until to-morrow, when he would go up to Brentwood to the morning service,