

**PUT TO THE PROOF.
A NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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Put to the Proof. A Novel. In Three Volumes. Vol. I by Caroline Fothergill

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CAROLINE FOTHERGILL

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VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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A NOVEL.

BY

CAROLINE FOTHERGILL.

"Fair, kind and true."
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
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1883.

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PUT TO THE PROOF.

CHAPTER I.

“This beggar-maid shall be my queen.”

SQUIRE TERRY had quarrelled with his son : it was impossible to doubt it. Dent, the footman, had been crossing the hall when Mr. Eustace had left the house, and the old servant had seen, from the expression of his young master's face, that he had for once made up his mind, and would be every whit as determined as his father. A few minutes later Dent had been summoned to Mr. Terry in the library, and had

Mr. Terry's letter 5.3.17. (2) = 3.10
Mr. Terry's letter 4 Feb. 5.4

any doubt on the subject been lingering in his mind, it must have been dispelled by what he saw and heard. Mr. Terry was seated in his own particular chair, his elbows resting on the arms, his hands tightly clasped, a look of invincible determination on his handsome, obstinate face. He had given a few orders respecting Mr. Eustace. His things were to be packed that they might be despatched at a moment's notice to any address the young gentleman might send; his name was never to be mentioned in his father's presence.

Dent left his master with a heart heavy and sorrowful. It had come to this, then. The young master, whom he had led by the hand and made much of when he was a child, had been driven from his home because he would not marry the woman whom his father had chosen for his wife.

“Dear, dear,” murmured the old man, shaking his head as he made his way from the library to his own quarters, “it is a pity; yet he never could abear Miss Agatha, and for two years he has been nigh crazed about this Margaret Shuttleworth. It will be an ill day when the Squire of Ash Fell comes to marry a mill hand, and yet I doubt she’ll make a fonder wife than Miss Agatha.”

The relations of these four people to one another may be quickly traced. Mr., or Squire Terry, as in the neighbourhood of his estate he was more generally called, was lord of the manor of Ash Fell. For centuries the family had ruled over the broad lands appertaining to it, and had dwelt in the stately mansion which formed the chief feature of the place. The house had been altered, repaired, and restored till

little remained of the original fabric, and the present dwelling-place of the Terrys was a handsome structure of no particular period or style of architecture. It stood on a raised terrace, and was immediately surrounded by gardens, tastefully and quaintly laid out; while beyond the gardens, away on all sides spread the park, remarkable on account both of its size and beauty.

Robert Terry, the present lord of the manor, had only one child, his son Eustace. He had been married twice; Eustace was the son of his first wife. The second Mrs. Terry had borne him no children; she was a widow with one daughter, who had married and gone out to India with her husband. So much for the dwellers of the Hall.

The girl of whom Dent had spoken as

“Miss Agatha” was Mr. Terry’s ward, Agatha Flintoft, a young lady some four years younger than Eustace, and who had grown up with him from a child. An heiress and an only child, Mr. Terry had looked upon her as in every way a fitting match for his son. He had not given much consideration to the question whether the young people loved one another or not. If he thought at all of their respective characters, it was to reflect that Agatha’s energy and decision of character would weigh well in the balance against his son’s dreamy, unpractical ways.

Last, but by no means least, factor in this problem was Margaret Shuttleworth. Neither heiress nor gently born, the only resemblance her circumstances bore to those of Miss Flintoft lay in the fact that she, too, was an only child. Her father