

**PUT TO THE PROOF:  
A NOVEL, IN THREE  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Put to the Proof: A Novel, in Three Volumes, Vol. II by Caroline Fothergill

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**CAROLINE FOTHERGILL**

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# PUT TO THE PROOF.

A NOVEL.

BY  
CAROLINE FOTHERGILL.

"Fair, kind and true."  
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,  
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1883.

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# PUT TO THE PROOF.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Dost thou love me, my beloved?"

\* \* \* \*

"I have seen thy heart to-day,  
Never open to the crowd;  
While to love me eye and eye  
Was the vow as it was vowed  
By thine eyes of steadfast grey."

It was August, when Margaret, coming in to lunch one day, announced that her work was ended. There were only a few guests at Fencehurst at the time, but they had been there long enough to have acquired an interest in the church. Her tidings,

therefore, created some excitement, and, when lunch was over, they all went to the church. Arrived there, they dispersed themselves about in groups, and though one or two ventured to criticize, none withheld admiration. Oswald stood by Margaret's side, but the companionship between these two had ceased to excite either surprise or comment; the surprise was felt when either was seen alone.

The carving certainly merited the admiration which was bestowed upon it. Margaret had surpassed herself. The delicate tracery and openwork looked almost like lace in their fineness, and the bold, firm strokes proved the hand of one who had mastered her art. Perhaps the most beautiful thing of all was the immense cross which stood at the top of the chancel screen, and which was twined with wreaths



of passion flowers, all cut in the shining black oak.

Mr. and Mrs. Bannister were enthusiastic in their praises, and Margaret owned that she was pleased with her work.

As they left the building, Mrs. Bannister put Margaret's hand on her arm, and, with the air of one continuing an interrupted conversation, said—

“It is of no use saying you must go, Margaret. I have made up my mind to keep you for some time yet.”

“You are very kind, but you forget that I may not spend my time in idleness and visiting. You know Mr. Stanley and Miss Denton are to be married in the spring, and I am to do all their dining-room furniture for them, including the mantelpiece.”

“But you must not begin to work again until you have had a rest.”

After much argument, Margaret consented to remain at Fencehurst a week longer, and though her hostess protested, she had to be satisfied.

The following afternoon Margaret stood by her bedroom window, thinking. She had a delicious sense of freedom and of being able to do as she chose without reference to time, that only the completion of a long piece of work can give. She wanted to go out, and she wanted solitude. She would go for a walk, but where? A sudden thought struck her: she would go to the Enchanted Valley. It was only two miles away, and the day was not too hot for walking. She took up her hat, which lay on the bed, and went downstairs. She met no one as she passed through the vestibule and out into the garden.

She walked slowly. There was plenty

of time, and the country looked exquisite. When she reached the Enchanted Valley, she drew a deep breath and looked round. It was the same as when she and Philip had sat there two years before.

“The solemn wastes of heathy hill  
Sleep in the July sunshine still;  
The selfsame shadows now, as then,  
Play through this grassy upland glen;  
The loose dark stones on the green way  
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay;  
Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,  
The sailing foam, the shining pool.”

She sat down and gazed round, looking as though her eyes could never be filled with the beauty of the place.

As she sat thus, abandoned to the pleasure of the moment, a voice, whose ring she knew well, said at her ear—

“Blow, west wind, by the lonely mound,  
And murmur, summer streams;  
There is no need of other sound  
To soothe my lady’s deams.”