

Let Not Man Put Asunder

Petrina and her stepmother sat at breakfast. Their little table was placed in a large bow-shaped embrasure, which Mrs. Faneuil had so cleverly contrived that all the lower part of the great window could be lifted upward. In fine weather they could thus breakfast and lunch in the open air. A larger table held the centre of the room; and the walls were hung with fine old prints, brought back by Petrina's grandfather and great-grandfather from their European travels in the days when photographs were unknown. The table was spread with silver of the Georgian era, each piece engraved with the Faneuil arms. The porcelain was of Sèvres, part of the service presented to one of the Peter Faneuils when minister to France. In any other house these things would have been kept in cabinets as objects of beauty; but Petrina would be served only from the best. She would rather have them broken than not used, she said, with the recklessness of a young princess who has not yet learned to economize her heritage.

Mrs. Faneuil, in her capacity of stepmother, had made it a point, since Petrina's majority, to leave the girl as free as possible. "It was the secret of getting on with her," she said, and she was right.

"You must not think that I am opposed to your choice," she said, after a long pause, "but you will own that it is unexpected."

"The merely expected in one's selection of a husband would be rather dull," said Petrina, as she sipped her coffee.

"That is just what strikes me about Mr. Vassall."

"I find it one of his attractions. You may think him dull. I call him only unobtrusive. I should hate a man who was always putting himself in the foreground."