

Let Not Man Put Asunder

"But I am not marrying to please everybody. I find it sufficiently hard to please myself."

"True," said Mrs. Faneuil, and again for a few minutes both were silent.

They were in the large bow-fronted dining-room at Faneuil Hill. Before them stretched a wide prospect of woodland, lake, and mountain. As one gazed outward one thought of the Tyrol, of the Schwartzwald, or of the English lakes; but one knew that such purity of air, such height of sky, such virgin freshness of forest life and landscape were essentially of New Hampshire.

Ashuelot is not in the White Mountains; it is among those numberless, unnamed hills that ripple away from the foot of Mount Majestic, and form that corner of New Hampshire thrust in between Massachusetts and Vermont. When Petrina's grandfather had bought the hill, to which the country people had given his name, Ashuelot was a township of widely scattered farmers, sturdily trying to wring a living out of the flinty soil. But among the New Hampshire hills Mother Erda is in one of her capricious moods. She is ready to charm man with her beauty, but not to give him bread. She subjects him to her own spell, but will not bend to his.

"These are not the wooers whom I seek," she seemed to say, as the patient toilers flung themselves, year after year, against her pitiless breast. "There are other lands for them to till. Let them go elsewhere. It is not for these that I have come up from the formless void and waited through centuries of calm."

"Lo, this one is mine!" she might have cried when, sixty years before Petrina's birth, young Peter Faneuil, after breaking through the thicket, first came out upon the hill that from his very feet swept downward to the lower landscape, as some great headland sweeps towards the sea.