

Let Not Man Put Asunder

Petrina thought highly of herself as the last of her race. There had been Peter Faneuils almost as long as there had been American history. When, at her birth, her mother lay dying, and they told her father that the baby was a girl, he had said, "Call her Petrina, for there will never be another Peter Faneuil now." She bore the name with pride; she was conscious of representing something of her country's past; she took, in her own estimation, a high place in the little group (acknowledged an aristocracy in every land) of those whose houses have rendered conspicuous public services. Sole inheritor of wealth, sole possessor of a name, sole mistress of her freedom, Petrina felt herself to stand apart from other young women of her age and station. In society, in friendship, in marriage, it was her idea to choose rather than be chosen, and to honor rather than be honored. Thus in bestowing her heart on Vassall she had been urged not by any hasty or too strong emotion; she had selected like a young queen-regnant who deliberately chooses from among the eligible princes of the earth.

To Vassall the indications of her preference had come like something too lovely to be credible. He had stood in the extreme outer circle of her admirers, scarcely expecting to be distinguished in the crowd. There were so many other men whom she might naturally have noticed before him—richer, cleverer, handsomer men, men whom she met at the dinners to which he was rarely invited, and at the dances which it was seldom his taste to attend—that when she began to single him out he took her favors as the kindness of a princess to her courtier and no more. He told himself not to hope; he held himself back from lifting his glance too high. In his attitude towards her he was deferential, but detached; friendly, but not familiar. He was