

Elder was a central interest in her life; she would have said instantly and cordially that she loved him dearly. She saw him many times every day; she knew all his outgoings and incomings; she knew the first step of his foot on the threshold; she felt that he belonged to them, and they to him. Yet as a woman thinks of the man whose wife she longs to be, Draxy had never once thought of Elder Kinney.

But when the new kitchen was finished, and the Millers entered on their separate housekeeping, a change came. As Reuben and Jane and Draxy sat down for the first time alone together at the tea-table, Reuben said cheerily:

"Now this seems like old times. This is *nice*."

"Yes," replied Jane. Draxy did not speak. Reuben looked at her. She coloured suddenly, deeply, and said, with desperate honesty,—

"Yes, father; but I can't help thinking how lonely Mr. Kinney must be."

"Well, I declare," said Reuben, conscience-stricken; I suppose he must be; I hate to think on't. But we'll have him in here's often's he'll come."

Just the other side of the narrow entry sat the Elder, leaning both his elbows on the table, and looking over at the vacant place where the night before, and for thirty nights before, Draxy had sat. It was more than he could bear. He sprang up, and leaving his supper untasted, walked out of the house.

Draxy heard him go. Draxy had passed in that moment into a new world. She divined all.

"He hasn't eaten any supper," thought she; and she listened intently to hear him come in again. The clock struck ten, he had not returned! Draxy went to bed; but she could not sleep. The little house was still; the warm white moonlight lay like summer snow all over it; Draxy looked out of the window; the Elder was slowly coming up the hill; Draxy knelt down like a little child, and said, "God bless him," and crept back to bed. When she heard him shut his bedroom door she went to sleep.

The next day Draxy's eyes did not look as they had looked the day before. When Elder Kinney first saw her, she was coming down stairs. He was standing at the foot of the staircase, and waited to say "Good morning." As he looked up at her, he started back and exclaimed: "Why, Draxy, what's the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter, sir," said Draxy, as she stepped from the last stair, and standing close in front of him, lifted the new, sweet, softened eyes to his. Draxy was as simple and sincere in this as in all other emotions and acts of her life. She had no coquetry in her nature. She had no distinct thought either of a new relation between herself and the Elder. She simply felt a new oneness with him; and she could not have understood the suggestion of concealment. Elder Kinney folded his empty arms very tight over his faithful, aching, foolish heart, and tried to say calmly and naturally, "Are you sure? Seems to me you don't look quite well."