

life, and, unconsciously, of her own. More than once the Elder wiped his eyes; more than once he rose and walked up and down before the door, gazing with undefined but intense emotion at this woman telling her pathetic story with the simple-hearted humility of a child. Draxy looked younger than ever curled up in the doorway, with her hands lying idle on her white apron. The Elder was on the point of stroking her hair. Suddenly she rose, and said, "But I am taking too much of your time, sir; will you take me now to see the house you spoke of, which we could hire?" She was again the majestic young woman. The Elder was again thrown back and puzzled.

He tried to persuade her to give up all idea of hiring the house: to make his house their home for the present. But she replied steadfastly, "I must look at the house, sir, before I decide." They walked down into the village together. Draxy was utterly unconscious of observation, but the Elder only knew too well that every eye of Clairvend was at some window-pane studying his companion's face and figure. All whom they met stared so undisguisedly that, fearing Draxy would be annoyed, he said,—

"You mustn't mind the folks staring so at you. You see they've been talkin' the matter all over about the land, an' your comin', for a month, an' it's no more than natural they should want to know how you look;" and he, too, looked admiringly at Draxy's face.

"Oh," said Draxy (it was a new idea to her mind), "I never thought of that."

"I hope they are all glad we are coming, sir," added she, a moment after.

"Oh yes, yes; they're glad enough. 'Taint often anything happens up here, you know, and they've all thought everything of you since your first letter came."

Draxy coloured. She had not dreamed of taking a whole village into her confidence. But she was glad of the friendliness; and she met every inquisitive gaze after this with an open, responsive look of such beaming good-will that she made friends of all whom she saw. One or two stopped and spoke; most were afraid to do so, unconsciously repelled, as the Elder had been at first, by something in Draxy's dress and bearing which to his extreme inexperience suggested the fine lady. Nothing could have been plainer than Draxy's cheap gray gown; but her dress always had character.

The house would not answer. Draxy shook her head as soon as she saw it, and when the Elder told her that in the spring freshets the river washed into the lower story, she turned instantly away, and said, "Let us go home, sir; I must think of something else."

At dinner Draxy was preoccupied and anxious. The expression of perplexity made her look older, but no less beautiful. Elder Kinney gazed at her more steadily than he knew; and he did not call her "child" again.