



DEAR MRS. KINNEY.

“YES, that’s what I call her, a sweet creature, if ever there was one. Not that I hold with her ways of thinking—no, ma’am, I can’t do that, they seem so bold and strange-like.

But they are not bold in her; I would not lay a mite of blame on her, ma’am. She comes and looks at me with her big blue eyes as innocent as her own baby’s, and says:

‘I tell the Lord everything just as it comes, Mrs. Bean, and He always helps me through. There’s nothing too little, nor yet too big. I pray over the toothache just as quick as I do when Robert is out in a storm.’ Robert is her husband, ma’am, and mate on a steamer.”

Mrs. Bean belonged to the clothing club of which I was one of the collectors, and she told me all this in answer to my inquiries about her next-door neighbour. I saw that she was at leisure and inclined for a chat, so I took the chair she offered, and asked what she found so strange in Mrs. Kinney’s religion.

“It isn’t the religion,” said Mrs. Bean, catching up a stocking and beginning to knit, “but her way of taking it. I pray to the Lord for grace and pardon, and to supply all my needs, but I don’t go into particulars, and I don’t think I am going to float through life on a wave of glory either. But she does; and when she breaks down she says it is her own fault too.

“We had some very straight words about it the other day. We walked home from church together on Sunday, and there had been a fine sermon about ‘Rejoice in the Lord,’ and Mrs. Kinney she was quite set up with it.

“‘That is the sort of life that’s worth living!’ she said, with her eyes sparkling and her cheeks pink. ‘There is goodness enough in God to keep us singing hallelujah all the time. Why, there is not a minute passes without bringing something to praise Him for.’

“Well, of course I agreed with her. It’s true enough; at the same time, we are but sinners, struggling through a hard world, and there is plenty to cry for as well as sing about.

“The very next day I went in to give Mrs. Kinney some yarn I had got for her, and there she was as white as a bit of paper, the baby lying on the bed,

and she holding on to a chair as though she would sink through the floor the next minute.

“‘I have not had a bit of sleep with baby all night,’ she says, ‘and being washing-day, I suppose I have overdone myself; somehow I had not time to get any dinner.’

“‘You want a good cup of tea, that’s what you want,’ I said, and so I stirred round, made up the fire, and coaxed her to lie down,—you see she is a slip of a thing, and the baby only six weeks old. So I got her a good cup of tea, and when she had taken about half of it, and looked a sight better, I said, ‘It seems to me there’s other things beside religion needed; there wasn’t much hallelujah about you just now, Mrs. Kinney.’

“She put down her spoon and gave me such a look—a sort of surprised, grieved look. ‘Why, no,’ she said, with a choky sort of sigh, ‘there wasn’t a scrap, not one little mite. I’ve been all night trying to bear with baby, and then get my wash done, and felt worse and worse the more I tried. I never took my weakness to Jesus, so how could He lift it off me? I tried to bear it all myself,’ she said, and two big tears stood in her eyes. ‘No wonder I broke down.’”

“And how have things gone on since?” I asked, as Mrs. Bean came to a pause.

“She has been as bright as a bee, ma’am, although the baby has taxed her a good deal, and she says I helped her to it. That when she turns faint and weary like, and feels discouraged, my voice speaks up again—‘Well, there isn’t much hallelujah about you,’ and then she just takes her trouble, whatever it is, to Jesus, and leaves it with Him. She says that’s the secret—to leave it—and then the song of praise comes into her heart directly.”

“She must have a very childlike spirit,” I said.

“That she has, ma’am. It is her gift, I tell her; but she won’t have it so at all. ‘It is every one’s gift to trust our Father in heaven,’ she says. ‘We are all His children—why should we not be happy and rest in His love?’”

“I am afraid it is because we do not believe His word,” I said, for Mrs. Bean’s account of her young neighbour had gone to my heart. “I wish I were more like your Mrs. Kinney.”

Mrs. Bean looked down. “I wish so too when I hear her talk; but yet it does seem rather strange, now doesn’t it?”

Yes, it did seem strange, and yet is it not written that the life of a Christian is “Giving thanks always for all things?”

Salem Hall.