

on that bleak inhospitable hill, under what shelter they could make. The siege made no progress, the trenches had to be kept, and each night's duty was rougher and keener than the last. The enemy was receiving reinforcements. He had already made an attack upon Balaclava, and who could say how soon he would try his strength in an assault upon their main position? The ride of the six hundred was fresh in every soldier's lips. There were no faint hearts in the British camp. And in the bright dreams of glory, and the sterner thought of duty, mingled hopeful visions of home. It was too cold for the men to be standing about. All who were not on duty sheltered themselves within their tents, where loud voices might have been heard in animated conversation discussing the probable events of the next few days.

Lionel Hayes had just returned from the trenches, and James Hudson, after waiting upon his master, was preparing to go to his own quarters.

"Wait an instant, James," said Lionel. "They all say there'll be a battle soon. God knows who may come out of it alive. If I should fall tell my father that I died as he would have me die, fighting bravely for my Queen and country. Give him this lock of my hair,—he always said it was so like my dear mother's; and tell your mother, James, that I've often thought of her goodness to me, more than ever, since we've been out here. She did her duty by me if ever a nurse did. You'll think of me sometimes, Jem, if you should go home alone, won't you? How I should like to be kneeling to-morrow in the old church, and to see my dear old father's white head! Those were happy days, and good days too, when we were confirmed together, and knelt side by side at Communion. I was better prepared then."

After a few moments' silence he continued; "But I must not think only of myself. Is there anything I can do for you, Jem?" In the memory of the days gone by he was speaking to his servant as a friend by the old name.

"Only say to my mother for me, sir, what you asked me to say to Sir John. Tell her too that I know it seemed unkind to leave her, but I couldn't bear for you to go to the war alone. And ask her to forgive me for any trouble I've caused her. She knows we shall meet again. And, sir, if I may make so bold—"

James hesitated.

"Well, Jem, go on."

"Please, sir, there's going to be a Celebration of the Sacrament early to-morrow morning. I only heard it this afternoon. The chaplain told me to let any one know that I thought would like to be there. It may be our last on earth. Won't you come, sir?"

Lionel's brow flushed.

"Jem," he replied, "I've been too careless about these things lately. How can I go? I've made no preparations. I'm not fit, God help me."

James looked up eagerly. "Not fit, sir. Who is? But you know all this better than I do. Oh! sir, I do wish you would come. We don't know whether we shall live to see another Sunday. Do go and talk to the chaplain sir. He said he would be up all night to see any one who might wish to speak with him."

Lionel was silent for a while, sitting forward in his chair with his hands over his eyes, James waiting respectfully by his side. Presently he spoke. "James, you are right. Come back in an hour's time, and we will go together to the chaplain's tent."