

RIZPAH ON THE ROCK.

Lessons Drawn by Dr. Talmage From a Typical Mother's Love.

WEAK WOMAN'S SUBLIME COURAGE

The Duty of Children Not to Abuse Her Lying Affection.

MATERNAL WATCHING AFTER DEATH

SPECIAL TELEGRAM FROM THE DISPATCH: BROOKLYN, Dec. 4.—Dr. Talmage selected for his text to-day Second Samuel, xxi, 10: "And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."

In the time of the text these regions were populous with multitudes of Jackals and Hares. Seven sons of that long-haired creature a hill. Rizpah was mother to two, and relative to five of the boys. What had these boys done that they should be crucified? Nothing except to have a bad father and a good mother. But now that the boys were dead why not take them down from the gibbets? No. They are sentenced to hang there. So Rizpah takes the sackcloth, a rough hair with which in mourning for her dead she had wrapped herself, and spreads that sackcloth upon the rocks near the gibbets, and acts the part of a sentinel. Rizpah is on guard both day and night and for half a year. What nerves she must have had to stand that. Ah! do you not know that a mother can stand anything?

What a hard thing that those seven boys should suffer for the crimes of a father and grandfather! Yes. But it is always so. Let everyone who does wrong know that he was not only as in the case against the boys, but against his father and grandfather, but against all the generations of coming time. That is why makes dissipation and uncleanness so awful. The Highest Persons Are Brought Low. Furthermore, this strange incident in Bible story shows that attractiveness of person and position are no security against trouble. Who is this Rizpah sitting in desolation? One of Saul's favorites. Her personal attractions had won his heart. She had been crowned of fortune. Some of the worst distresses have come to scenes of royalty and wealth. The wheel of fortune keeps turning, and mansions and huts exchange, and he who rode the chariot passes the barrow, and instead of the glare of festal lights is the shimmering of the heat-fire, and in place of Saul's palace is the rock, the cold rock, the desolate rock. But this is the place which God comes.

Against the tragedy of the text displays the courage of woman amid great calamities. What mother or sister or daughter would dare go to the gibbet corners and jackal Rizpah did it. And so would you if an emergency demanded. Woman is naturally timid and slender, and her exposure and depends on stronger arms for the achievement of great enterprises. And she is often troubled lest there might be occasional demanding fortitude when she would fail. Not so some of these who are afraid to look out of door after midnight, and who quake in the darkness at the least uncertain sound, and who start at the creak of the door, and turn pale in a thunder-storm, if the day of trial came would be heroic and invulnerable. God has arranged it so that woman needs the trumpet of some great contrast of principle or effort to arouse up her slumbering courage. Then she will stand under the cross fire of opposing hosts at thunders to give wine to the wounded.

Woman's Heroism at Home. I saw one in a desolate home. Her meretricious companion had pawned even the children's shoes for rum. From the house of ancestry she had come down to this. The crane of oil was empty and the last candle gone out. Her faded frock was patched with fragments of antique silk that she had worn on the bright night of the dancing, and in God, she had a strong heart to which her children ran when they trembled at the sight of her. Rizpah was not alone. She had a God. Though the heavens were filled with fierce wings and the thickets gnashed with rage, Rizpah watched faithfully day by day and year after year, and wolf and cormorant by her God-strengthened arm were hurled from the rock. A just God watches the streets where there are heroines greater than Joan of Arc.

Now, I ask if mere natural courage can do so much, what may we not expect of women who have gained the strength of heaven, and who are urged forward by all the voices of grace that sound from the Bible, and all the tones of victory that speak from the sky? If you not the bowl of that awful storm of trouble and sin that both towered in silvered hills into the breaker's crown, you not that the whole earth is strewn with the wreckage? That there are wounds to be healed and broken hearts to be comforted and downing souls to be rescued? Some have come down and some come too late, but others are clinging to the wreck, are shivering with the cold, are struggling in the wave, are crying to you for deliverance. Will you not, ear in hand, put out to-day for the light-house?

The Power of Maternal Love. Again, the scene of the text impresses upon us the strength of maternal attachment. Not many men would have had courage or endurance for the awful mission of Rizpah. To dare the rage of wild beasts, and sit from May to October unshielded, and to watch the corpses of unborn children, was a work that nothing but the maternal heart could have accomplished. It needed more strength than to stand before opened batteries or to walk in calumny the decks of a foundering steamer. There is no emotion so completely unselfish as maternal affection. Conjugal love expires the moment of many kindnesses and attentions. Faint love expects parental care or is helped by the memory of past watchfulness. But the strength of a mother's love is entirely independent of the past and the future, and is of all emotions, the purest. The child has done nothing in the past to earn kindness, and in the future it may grow up to neglect its parent, but still from the mother's heart there goes forth incomprehensible affection. Abuse cannot offend it, neglect cannot chill it, its constant face it. Death cannot destroy it. For selfishness it is unselfish, for the blow it is beneficent, ministry, for neglect it has increasing watchfulness. At weeps at the prison door over the incarcerated young man, and pleads for pardon at the Governor's feet, and is forced away by compassionate friends from witnessing the struggles of the gallows.

Oh, despise not a mother's love! If heretofore you have been negligent of such one, and you still have opportunity for repentance, make haste. If you could only just look in for an hour's visit, you would rise up in the aged one a whole world of blissful memories. Abuse Not a Mother's Kindness. What if she does sit without talking much; she watches you for many months when you know not how to talk at all. What if she has many sentences to scold you during 25 years you ran her with every little scratch and bruise, and she doctored your little finger as carefully as a surgeon would find the worst fracture. They say she is childish now; I wonder if she ever saw you when you were children. You have no patience to walk with her on the streets, she moves so slowly. I wonder if she remembers the time when you were glad enough to go slowly. You complain at the expense of providing for her now. I wonder what your financial income was from one year to ten years ago. Do not begrudge what you do for the old folks. I care not how much you did for them, they have done more for you. But from this weird text of the mourning comes rushing in upon you a thought that overpowers you. This watching by Rizpah was an after-death watching. It was not an after-death watching. It was an after-death watching. What an appalling consideration! And what comforting thought! You mother, you who have just lost your babe and who feel the need of a mother's sympathy, your mother knows all about it. And so let us walk to be worthy of the maternal compassion, and if to any of us life on earth is a hard grind let us understand that if we watch faithfully and trust fully our blessed Lord there will be a corresponding reward in the Land of Peace.

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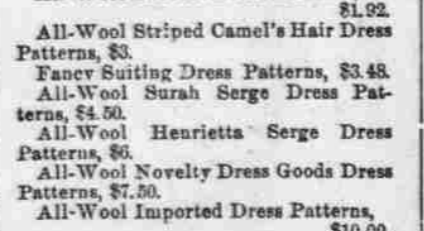
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