

those soft, dark, pleading eyes, marked her character to possess high determination, inflexible perseverance, united with a winning gentleness, fitted to captivate and control the impetuous son of Kish.

"What you say, my dear Salome," replied Kizpah, after a pause, "gives me some comfort. I will hope to retain the monarch's preference—if he will continue to smile as he does now, Kizpah will ask no happier destiny than that of ministering before him. But, beloved Salome, I have been thinking how many years shall pass away; how many tears shall fall; how many beloved ones shall bow to the Angel of Death, ere I stand on this lovely spot again."

Kizpah had struck a tender chord, and the young girls mingled their tears without restraint.

The dawn of the succeeding day saw Kizpah on her way to Gilgal, where Saul held his court.

Years passed on, and Kizpah became a mother, and in the society and infantile caresses of her children, found a refuge from many hours of lonely sadness. She had realized all her fears—plucked as a fragrant blossom from her woodland home, she too had ceased to charm, and her place was supplied by a younger, but not fairer, or more true, or tender being than herself; yet she had never ceased to regard the monarch with the tender emotion he first inspired her with. Kizpah was one of those clinging, trusting natures, which are sometimes thrown in the pathway of the sternest of earth's sons; and, throwing around the rough surface of the latter the beautiful and graceful festoons of woman's devotedness, conceal and soften their outlines of character into a pleasing and almost attractive form.

It was so with Kizpah. There were hours when a glance of her beaming eye, or an accent of her melodious voice, would bring Israel's haughty sovereign to her feet, and cause him to reiterate those professions of attachment which first lured her from her early home in the vicinity of Gilboa.

Time passed on. One day Kizpah was surprised by a visit from Saul. He tenderly caressed Armoni and Mephiboseth, who were in their mother's apartment, and dismissed them. "Kizpah," said he, after a pause, "I come to bid you farewell. I go to lead my noble warriors against the hosts of Philistia."

"Jehovah grant thee success," replied Kizpah.

"Speak not thus to me, Kizpah," returned the impetuous monarch. "Jehovah hath ceased to regard the son of Kish; I have grown wiser than when I weakly suffered myself to be led by Samuel; I have gained experience, and need no omens to point my pathway."

"Oh, would that the venerable seer were yet alive!" ejaculated Kizpah. "He ever stood between the inaccessible and pure Jehovah and us frail mortals; and say, beloved, were not thine happiest days those when thou didst follow his counsels without cavil?"

"Kizpah!" exclaimed Saul sternly.

"Pardon me, I meant not to offend," returned Kizpah weeping; "but when I reflect on the precarious tenure by which the lives I most value are held, I can but wish that some holy man would arise and guide Judah's tempest-driven barque to a harbor of safety."

"Methinks, Kizpah, you might find more suitable themes for reflection, than taking the responsibility of a government on yourself. Assure yourself, whatever transpires, you will not be blamed."

"Yet I must feel," returned Kizpah quickly. "Oh, go not, I implore you, until you have returned to the God of our fathers. Remember, He who gave you the kingdom can recall it as easily as He bestowed it."

"Kizpah, no more. Never name this hateful subject again. The morrow's dawn sees me on my journey."

"Is it thus we part?" exclaimed Kizpah, "with all the uncertainties of war before us? Must our last words be spoken in haste and anger? May no sweet remembrance mingle in the recollection of that farewell?"

Kizpah's appeal was not unavailing. The haughty spirit of Saul was touched—he lingered long in her apartment, and they parted with as much warmth of feeling as marked their earlier hours.

Day followed day, but nought was heard of the royal army. At length the dread tidings arrived, that Israel was discomfited before her enemies—that Saul, and Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua had fallen on the very mountain where Kizpah's girlish footsteps had so often strayed in that sunny time, when care and sorrow were to her young heart, simply names without meaning. Then was her soul bowed in deep bitterness; but her sons, Armoni and Mephiboseth were still left, and the feelings of the mother gradually assuaged and superseded those of the mere woman. Kizpah lived on, in seclusion and in peace; and though her spirits never wholly recovered their elasticity, her life passed for some years calmly and peacefully.

Meanwhile Armoni and Mephiboseth grew to the estate of manhood, and passed from beneath the control of their mother.

Some years after the death of Saul Israel suffered severely from famine, three successive years. When David enquired of the Lord the cause, the answer returned was,—“It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.” David therefore consulted with the Gibeonites as to the terms of expiation.

It was finally agreed, that the sacrifice of seven of the male member's of Saul's family should constitute the expiatory rite.

We may imagine, but no language can describe the emotions of Kizpah, when she learnt that her heart's best treasures were selected as two of the victims. Those manly forms, in whose martial and almost regal beauty, she delighted to recall the image of their departed father—must they be laid silent and motionless; or must they suffer every indignity a justly enraged populace chose to heap on them? Those brilliant eyes, which had ever looked forth in love and tenderness on their mother's face, must they be so suddenly veiled forever?

Ah! these, and a thousand other torturing recollections, wrung that mother's heart almost to breaking; yet the very intensity of her feelings supported her against herself. There was no appeal, and well did Kizpah know that the house of Saul had been one of blood; and while her own heart bled at every pore, she had nought to urge against the justice of that sentence, which fearfully fulfilled the denunciation, "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations."

The parting between Kizpah and her sons may be conceived by every mother. The Holy Spirit has not detailed its particulars, and we forbear to enlarge on the distressing circumstances. Let it suffice, that the sentence of the law was carried into execution.

And now the character of Kizpah beamed forth in bright effulgence. For six long, weary months did that devoted one watch beside the clay-cold corpses of her sons and their relatives, as they hung, suspended on the summit of that very mountain where her young days had passed so happily. How often during these weary vigils must her conversation with Salome have recurred to her mind—how often, amid the dread, dim, mystic hours of midnight, must the awful vision of Saul in his last agonies have harassed her tried spirit. How overwhelming must have been her reflections, as she beheld the last links of love which bound her to earth rudely severed, and their lifeless bodies waving before her startled sight in every passing breeze. Yet she fainted not, but suffered not the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the evil beasts which roamed around the mountain to touch them by night.

Can we not imagine her rapture, when the first genial drops of rain proclaimed their sacrifice was accepted? Can we not sympathize with her deep gratitude, when David, hearing of her maternal devotion, ordered their bones to be collected and laid with their father's in the family sepulchre?

In perusing the preceding sketch, the question must often have recurred to the intelligent reader, where was Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the adopted mother of the other five victims, during the weary vigils of the affectionate Kizpah? It has never appeared to me, that Michal, charming as she must have been in external attractions, possessed one tittle of the moral and intellectual loveliness, which bind us even at this remote period to the devoted daughter of Aiah. In early life, her beauty won the heart of the shepherd boy; but her ill-timed