

THE SLEEPLESSNESS OF THE SOUL.

BY MADAME DE GASPARIN.

The soul does not sleep, it lives; it is the body that lies low in the slumbers of the tomb.

Can you conceive a sleeping soul, a dreamless sleep? I find that such a state borders too closely upon annihilation, not to excite in man extreme repulsion. In fact, it is temporary annihilation.

To cease to exist during centuries, perhaps ages; to give up a life throbbing with the love of the Saviour; to be frozen up after the fashion of antediluvian mammoths; to exchange the activity of thought, the full employment of every faculty, for a suspension that amounts to total extinction,—to speak frankly, does this prospect fill your heart with joy? Mine remains aghast at it. Nevertheless, if the Word of God declares

many men, of high consideration, affirm that it does!

One word, one only, authorizes this opinion; a very strong word, it is true, and often repeated, the word *sleep*.

Death is sleep; those who die *fall asleep*. What remains to be said in reply?

Much; nay, all.

The word is there, no doubt. But as long as its meaning is undefined, the question remains open. In what sense are we to take this word "sleep?" How is it applied in the Scriptures? This is what it concerns us to know. This alone will solve the difficulty.

This word applies to the body, not in any sense to the soul.

It is the body that sleeps, absolutely unconcerned by all that goes on in this world or in the other. It sleeps heavily, no voice can rouse it, not even that dear voice whose lightest whisper sufficed to thrill it during the days of life on earth.

You know it but too well, that implacable sleep; you who have folded in a last embrace that poor body, indifferent now to every appeal of yours. An hour ago, it saw your tears, your pale face; it sees them no longer. All that the soul saw and heard, those angelic messengers that God

often sends to light it on its passage; the body, if it saw them at all, sees and hears no longer. It has fallen down inert, it remains inert, and the immortal germ that God has placed within it, the spark which His breath will re-ignite, is so deeply buried in dust and ashes, that no human search can ever discover it.

Has the soul then succumbed? Is the spirit paralysed? Let us draw near, and examine more closely into this. This dreadful word "sleep," will—thanks to Jesus who applied it to Himself—at once assume its own proper and circumscribed meaning.

Here is the garden of Joseph; here is the sepulchre. The body of Jesus is resting there! What says Holy Writ?—Jesus sleeps.

He sleeps! This is the language employed by Scripture. When Scripture speaks of Jesus dying, they say, He fell asleep. When they speak of His resurrection, it is as of awaking out of sleep.

No distinction is here made between the body and the soul of the Son of God. If we take the sleep of death in an absolute sense, the whole nature of Jesus was, for a season, subjugated by I know not what lethargy. For three days the spirit of Jesus, the Lord of Life, remained paralysed, benumbed. You might have traversed the whole earth, its height and depth; you might have sounded the immensity of heaven, nowhere would you have met with Jesus! For three whole days the Word—He who could say of Himself, *I am*—He, even He, *was not*.

Does not the shudder occasioned by such a thought as this at once convince you of its sacrilegious absurdity?

Well then, the whole of revelation declares of Jesus that He slept.

If it says this of Him, it may well say it of us. There is nothing in that which need terrify us any longer.

The Pharisees said it when they set a watch around His tomb—"We remember that that deceiver said, In three days I will awake, arise again."