

ANGELS AND MINISTERS OF GRACE.

OUR mortal eyes are held in that, through their agency, we have but small knowledge of a yet smaller portion of the creation. "Who," asks the inspired writer, "is able to declare His works?" And because our vision is so held, except we are blessed with the faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things which appear not," we gradually lose the remembrance of, or belief in, the existence of things not seen. So in the rush and turmoil of this, our nineteenth century, we are carried upon its flood with such an impetus that it is impossible to give our souls pause, or to cast a retrospective glance at the period when time was not—nor aught else, save God.

The era of the Creation looms up but dimly from out the mists of the ages, and the days when Adam walked in Paradise seem so lost in the perspective, that many of his sons, impatient of the mental strain required to trace yesterday into yesterday through yesterdays innumerable, have taken refuge in a total denial of the yesterday sought :

"In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved over the waters."

Until then, since an eternity, so incomprehensible that in the endeavor to realize it the first of Creation's mornings presses so closely upon our own little day as to seem a part of it, the perfections of the Godhead had been revealed to no created sense. Reflected in that vast crystal sea which St. John saw spread before the Throne, the beauty and the grandeur of the adorable Trinity had sufficed unto itself.

That boundless Love, ever springing from the Nature of the Father, found no created being to revel in the beauty of it; to thank Him for the boon of it; no responsive spirit to bow in adoration.

But "God said, 'Be Light made,' and Light was made, and God saw the Light that it was good!"

He spoke, and lo! the refulgence of thrice three thousand suns could not make up the sum of that material light's intensity. Whence was it? Did it emanate from the Face of the Triune God? Or was it a radiance from the wings of those ethereal beings to whom that Word, gifted with twofold power over the material and the intellectual, was the Word of Life?

Endowed with a wisdom and a knowledge of which the finite mind of man cannot conceive, the Angels understood the scheme of the Creation, and that it included a being gifted with an intelligence only a little lower than their own, whose place in heaven should be nearer the Throne than theirs, won by the sacrifice of God to God; that this Sacrifice was to be the outcome of the Creator's love for this creature, all ungrateful and disobedient though he be. Their jealousy at this choice of a nature wanting in so many of their own high gifts, and, therefore, so immeasurably beneath the Godhead, and their astonishment at this revelation, fructified into insurrection. One-third of their number, led by him who, even amid that refulgent throng, shone as the Star of the Morning, fell into rebellion against the Will they had so lately worshipped.

And for their sin there was no mercy; awful beyond the power of words was their instantaneous punishment.

I.

For an account of the fall of the Angels, which, according to theologians, took place before the creation of man, and about the first day of the six devoted by the Creator to His work, we must go to the last book of the Scriptures—the Apocalypse. By a retrospective revelation St. John was allowed to witness this engagement, short, sharp, and decisive.

“And there was a great battle in Heaven; Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and they prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast forth into the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

Let us rise on the wings of Faith, guided by the Word of God, to the Footstool of the Throne. Here, nearest to Jehovah, stand the Seven; St. John saw in His hand the seven stars, which “are the angels of the seven churches,” and that each angel held a trumpet. Very beautiful is the vision which the Scriptures permit of these:

First of the mystic group is the princely Michael; he whom we saw but now flushed with victory. This radiant figure stands forth distinct and glorious, even in the white splendor which surrounds his God.

Gabriel, the gentle angel of the Annunciation, the Trumpeter of the Judgment Day, is particularly dear to us, as it was through him came the glad tidings of redemption.

Raphael, he whose nature responds to the heart-throbs of hu-

manity, to whom he brings most tender comforting, is the prince of guardians.

Uriel is mentioned in the Fourth Book of Esdras, "The angel who was sent to me, whose name was Uriel."¹

The nine choirs form the next division, but the sacred text does not give the order of their service.

Although the sacred writings do not tell us of any special ministry of the angels while our first parents were untempted, the sense of Scripture is that Lucifer, the fallen Archangel, spoke by the Serpent's crafty tongue. Then came the act of disobedience, and the man and woman were driven from their earthly Eden while Cherubim and a flaming sword turning every way kept the gates.

Hagar, fleeing from Sarah's anger, is met by an angel and sent back, and the future greatness of her unborn son is told her. Afterwards, the innocent victim of a jealous woman's anger, she is turned into the wilderness with her child. Her small stock of provisions soon fails, and where in all that stretch of sand will she find water? She puts the child down, and, going a distance, covers her face and wails out her plaint to God. The heaven opens and an angel speaks. A fountain has sprung up at His bidding, and the outlawed boy is saved.

The three men whom Abraham entertained in his tent, and at whose prophesy Sarah laughed, were angels. An angel prevented the sacrifice of Isaac; because of Lot's hospitality to two angels he and his escape the destruction of Sodom. Jacob has the vision of the ladder upon which angels are ascending and descending. Again, angels meet him when fleeing from Laban, but no mention is made of their mission. Later an angel wrestles with him, from whom he afterwards asks a blessing.

Night falls over Egypt and in its silence the dread angel of God goes through the land touching with fateful finger the hearts of the first born and bids their pulsations cease. Then, and not till then, does Moses lead out the chosen people. An angel guide is provided for them, to whom God advises them to listen:

"Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be condemned, for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned and My Name is in him."

There is another battle between Michael and the fallen Lucifer, which is mentioned only by St. Jude in his epistle, and that was "when Michael the Archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses." It is Michael whom Joshua meets in

¹ The Fourth Book, however, it must be remembered, is not recognized by the Church as canonical Scripture. She, nevertheless, has adopted from it one of her Introits in Easter week. From the same book is derived the text current through all Christendom, "*Magna est veritas, et praevalabit*" (Truth is great, and shall prevail).

the field of Jericho. Unlike the wrestler with Jacob, he does not refuse to tell his name. After Joshua's death the people fall back into idolatry, and an angel is sent to reproach them, whereupon, with equal facility they repent and lift up their voices in weeping. The place of their lamentation is called the Place of Tears.

Gideon was called while engaged in preparations for flight from the Madianites. To the salutation of the angel, "The Lord is with thee, O, most valiant of men," he returned an answer very natural under the circumstances: "I beseech thee, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why have these evils fallen upon us?" And when, after the burning of the victims of the usual sacrifice offered on such occasions by means of the fire communicated through the touch of the angel's rod, Gideon recognized the character of his celestial visitor, he was alarmed lest death follow, and cried out, "Alas! my Lord God; for I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." And the Lord answered, "Peace be with thee; fear not, thou shalt not die."

The story of the birth of Samson is a long one. When upon the offering of the sacrifice "the flame of the altar went up towards heaven, the angel of the Lord ascended also in the flames," and Manoe also feared death from having seen the face of an angel.

Sennacherib sought to destroy the holy city, and lo! an angel of the Lord goes out and smites his forces during the night.

There is no more exquisite idyllic picture in all the old Testament than the story of Tobias and his archangelic companion. The meeting, the journey, the return—each is perfect in itself, and through all the sweetness of the great prince of the heavenly cohorts is seen his prudence, wisdom and charity supreme.

The prophets held daily converse with these celestial messengers, receiving the word of God through their agency. Isaias saw the Seraphim gathered about the Godhead making a shield of their wings. And they cried to one another: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His Glory! And one of the Seraphim flying to the prophet, touched his lips with a live coal which he had taken off the altar, with the tongs, saying: Behold this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed.

The vision recorded in the first chapter of Ezechiel was of the Cherubim: "The noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, as it were the voice of the Most High . . . and when they stood their wings were let down." In Daniel we read of the angel who walked with the three young men in the fiery furnace. The prophet's vision of the ram and goat is interpreted by Gabriel, and, again, that later vision, relating to the coming of our Lord, is read by the same messenger. The third vision vouchsafed to Daniel is after

he has humbled himself by fasting and penance. Again, Gabriel, although he is not named, comes to comfort him, for the vision was most awful in its grandeur. He explains it at great length, but before doing so recounts a battle which he had with the "Prince of the kingdom of the Persians," in which Michael had assisted him. After recounting the meaning of the vision, he says: "And now I will return to fight against the prince of the Persians. When I went forth, there appeared the prince of the Greeks coming, . . . and none is my helper in all these things but Michael your prince, that is, the guardian angel of the Jews." Gabriel also tells Daniel that from the first year of Darius the Mede, "I stood up," *i.e.*, "fought for him, that he might be strengthened and confirmed"—to assist God's chosen people. When Daniel was thrown the second time into the lion's den, Gabriel was ordered to carry Habacuc by the hair of his head from Judea to Babylon, that he might feed the imprisoned prophet with the dinner he had prepared for the reapers, "and he had boiled pottage and had broken bread in a bowl."

When Zacharias questioned as to the meaning of his vision of the angels, the Archangel Michael replied. Afterwards the Archangel made that touching supplication for the people: "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou have mercy upon Jerusalem and on the cities of Judea with which thou hast been angry, this is now the seventieth year?" This book is replete with angelic explanations of prophetic utterances.

And when Heliodorus would have seized the treasure of the Temple, he was baffled. "For there appeared to them a horse with a terrible rider upon him, adorned with a very rich covering, and he ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his fore-feet, and he that sat upon him seemed to have armor of gold. Moreover, there appeared two other young men, beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, and in comely apparel," who added the scourging with many stripes to the trampling of the hoofs.

As the priest Zachary is performing the duties of his office by offering incense within the Temple, an angel stands beside the altar and foretells the birth of John. He announces himself to be "Gabriel, who stands before God." Meantime the Sinless One has been assigned by marriage to the protection of Joseph, and six months after his visit to Zachary the same benignant being stands within the humble Nazarite house and hails its mistress "Full of Grace!"

The work of redemption is begun.

An angel dispels the doubts of Joseph regarding his beloved spouse, and saves the Immaculate from vulgar judgment.

"Whilst deep silence dwelt on all things below, and the night was in the midst of its course, the Almighty Word came down

from its throne." Mary and Joseph kneel in humblest adoration, angels throng the stable, while out there, where there are shepherds watching their flocks by night, an angel of the Lord appears and bids them "fear not, for I bring ye glad tidings. This day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord," . . . and presently there was a multitude of the heavenly hosts with him singing "Glory to God on high and on earth peace!"

An angel warns Joseph of the designs of Herod, and directs him to carry the Child into Egypt. When the danger is over, by the same messenger, he is ordered to return to his own country, but to Nazareth, not Bethlehem.

After the going up to Jerusalem and that mysterious three days, loss, there is silence, and the next eighteen years are summed up in five little words: "He was subject to them."

The three years so full of mystery, of awe, and of awe-dispelling love, began, as we know, with the Baptism. If the Dove which descended upon the Son of Mary on that occasion was accompanied by angels, there is no record of them. Only after the temptation is there mention of any such spiritual ministrations. Again, in that most awful dereliction in the Garden, when the precious blood streamed from every pore, St. Luke tells of an angel coming to strengthen Him. The sacred writings make no more mention of angels through those hours of torture; only on the morning of the resurrection do we again see their radiant faces. And once more upon the hill of the Ascension is their gracious presence visible.

In the Acts we read of the revelation by an angel to Cornelius of the Italian Legion; of the sending of St. Peter to him; of the release of St. Peter from prison, and of the constant interest with which they fulfil their Creator's bequests in His ordering of His Church.

The Apocalypse teems with angel ministrants.

At the last day—that direful day, sung by sibyls and prophets, at the very thought of which our bodies faint and our souls shrink into nothingness, the power and the beauty and the multitude of the angelic hosts will be fully revealed, as God's messengers and assistants; led by Michael, Gabriel, and their compeers, they will bear to each the blessing or the ban as the soul shall merit. With triumphant hosannas they will marshal the saved into their own bright realms; with pity, perhaps, but with unquestioning obedience they will drive the lost into the yawning pit.

II.

In the preceding remarks the Scripture story has been followed, if not in its entirety, at least with no presuming note or comment. All flights of fancy, all dreams of poets or of painters have been

intentionally ignored, although the temptation to fill out the outlines as they ran was great. But in portraying the angels as guardian spirits, it will not be possible to preserve so colorless a tone.

In what has been collected we see that the angels were indeed ministering spirits, guarding and watching, not only individuals but nations, not only cities, but temples and altars. Hence the doctrine referring to the guardian angels is built upon foundations coming up from the beginning of the world, although not defined as *of faith*. The conviction has always been general that angels are the agents of Divine Providence.

"The angels," says Origen, "preside over all visible things, earth, air, fire and water; that is, over the principal elements, the animals, the celestial bodies. Their ministries are divided. Some take the productions of the earth; others preside over wells and rivers; some again preside over the winds, others over the sea."

Nor is this the only patristic testimony. Even pagans support the idea, as Apuleius. "If it is not becoming for a king to govern all things by himself, much less would it be so for God. We must, then, believe that, in order to preserve his majesty, he is seated on a sublime throne, and rules over all parts of the universe by celestial powers. It is, in fact, by their ministry that he governs this lower world. To do so costs him neither trouble nor calculation, things which are inseparable from the ignorance and the weakness of man."

They preside also over the government of the invisible world. Ministering spirits sent to procure the sanctification of the elect, the angels execute the will of God towards man. It is certain that He has almost always made use of their services in the wonders which He has wrought, in the graces which He has bestowed, and in the just judgments which He has executed in favor of His Church, as well under the old as under the new law.

Judith went forth into the camp of Holofernes restful in her confidence in the protection of her angel-guardian. In the Acts one of the most prominent displays of angelic interference is the sending of Philip the Deacon to the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, that he might instruct and baptize the envoy of Queen Candace.

They keep guard over the human race, and it is chiefly to this guardianship and care that the celestial intelligences are appointed. "God," says Lactantius, "sends His angels to guard, and, as it were, to cultivate the human race; they are our guides and tutors."

They guard empires, as we have seen in Daniel, the archangel Gabriel is engaged in dispute with the Prince of the Persians. From this passage and some others, the Fathers absolutely conclude that every nation or kingdom has its tutelary angel. St. Basil positively distinguishes national from individual guardian

angels, and proves, by Scripture, the existence of both these angelic ministries. The other Fathers of the Church teach the same.

They guard each church. That which St. Basil, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, and many other ancient writers say of kingdoms and nations they also say of each particular church, which they do not doubt is placed under the protection of a special tutelar angel. Origen states in several places that it would be too long to prove it. Eusebius, of Caesarea, is no less formal. "God wishes," he says, "that every angel should watch as a guardian over the Church committed to it."

St. Gregory Nazianzen believed the same thing. Hence in the beautiful discourse which he delivered when quitting Constantinople and bidding a tender farewell to all who had been connected with that great metropolitan Church, he placed in the first rank the holy angels who were the protectors of it. All the Fathers were persuaded, with St. Ambrose, that God is not content with establishing a bishop over each flock, but He has likewise appointed an angel to guard it.

They guard the universal Church. If each particular Church has a tutelar angel, with much greater reason must we suppose that a very large number of angels watch continually over the welfare of the universal Church. "The celestial powers," says Eusebius, "guard the Church of God." St. Hilary represents them as surrounding the sheepfold of Jesus Christ, and fulfilling in its regard the duties of soldiers, who are appointed to the defence of a city. St. Gregory of Nyssa compares them to that tower which is mentioned in the Canticle of Canticles and from which hung an immense number of bucklers, to teach us that these blessed spirits protect and defend the Church in its continual warfare against the powers of darkness.

They guard each one of us. Every man has a guardian angel destined to enlighten, defend and guide him during the whole course of his mortal life. This consoling truth is, next after dogmas expressly defined, one of the best founded in Scripture and tradition. Although it is neither expressed in formal terms in the Holy Books, nor absolutely defined by the Church, it is, nevertheless, received by the unanimous consent of this same universal Church. It has, moreover, so solid a foundation in texts of Scripture, understood according to the interpretation of the holy fathers, that we cannot deny it without very great temerity and almost without error. Such is the opinion of Suarez, who remarks, moreover, that Calvin was the first who dared to call this truth in question and then to reject it.

So far the Catechism of Perseverance, which we have followed almost verbatim.

“He has given His angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest, perhaps, thou hurt thy foot against a stone.” These words of the royal prophet and sweet singer of Israel, although pointing especially to our Saviour, as is seen by Satan’s quotation after the temptation, yet are equally applicable to each one of us. Our Saviour Himself says of the little ones that “their angels do behold the Face of my Father who is in Heaven.”

The love which these guardians bear us is so ardent that the prophet asks: “Who makest thy ministers a burning fire?” According to St. Augustine their love is beyond all conception; it is fanned into a flame by the consideration of God, of man, and of themselves. It is the perfection of charity. They are so ravished by the ineffable dignity, beauty and loveliness of the Sacred Humanity that, according to St. Peter (1 : 12), the more they gaze upon it the more they love it, the more they would like to love it, the more they consecrate themselves to it, the more perfect still they would wish to make their holocaust, “on whom the angels desire to look.” And again, “when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith: “And let all the angels of God adore Him?”

St. Augustine calls them the “enlighteners of our souls, the protection of our bodies, the warden of our goods.” In Jacob’s blessing upon his grandsons, “the angel that delivereth me from all evils, bless these boys,” we have authority for begging their blessing upon our avocations and ourselves. And in the angel who walked in the fiery furnace with the three children we see how they sympathize with us in our afflictions. Also in Isaias: “Behold they that see shall cry without, the angel of peace shall weep bitterly.” But also—O blessed and most sweet comforting! “there is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner who repenteth more than over ninety-nine just.”

How triumphantly do Peter’s words sound, after his liberation: “Now I know in very deed that the Lord hath sent His angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jews.” And Judith proclaimed, with the same triumphant spirit, to the people how she had trusted to her guardian angel: “As the Lord liveth, His angel hath been my keeper both going hence and abiding there and returning from thence, hither.”

“Our weakness,” adds St. Hilary, “could not resist the malice of the evil spirits without the assistance of our guardian angels.” “God aiding,” says St. Cyril, “we have nothing to fear from the powers of darkness, for it is written: the angel of the Lord will encamp round those who fear Him and will deliver them.”

"Our guardian angels," to quote Origen again, "offer our prayers to God through Jesus Christ, and they also pray for him who is confided to them." "It is certain," says St. Hilary, "that the angels preside at the prayers of the faithful." And St. Augustine once more: "The angels not only bring us the favors of God, but they also offer Him our prayers." Not that God is ignorant of them, but the more easily to obtain for us the gifts of His mercy and the blessings of His grace."

St. John saw, as he tells us in the Apocalypse, "another angel came and stood before the altar having a golden censer, and there was given him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God, and the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel.

But above all, in his gracious, tender patience, his pity and compassion, as type of angelic compassion, stands forth the star-crowned Raphael.

This dispensation is not the least among the adorable rulings of God's mercy to men. These friends of ours, closer and more intimate than any mortal companion can be, never leave our side. Some favored few among us, of exceptional holiness have been permitted, either to see their guardian in material form, to realize his guiding by sensible touch, or to receive his advice through their sense of hearing. The fathers do not agree as to the extent of the protection of the angels to all men. Some think that each human being in existence has a guardian who never leaves him; others that only the just are so favored and only for the time that they persevere in justice. Sin seems to move them to a distance. St. Basil says: "The angels are always near each faithful soul, unless they are banished by evil actions." He says also that the guardian angels assist those more especially who give themselves to fasting. St. Thomas says that no sinner is entirely abandoned by his guardian angel.

Adversaries of the doctrine of the invocation of saints and angels seize upon the use of the word worship, as implying an adoration as to God. In this they do not distinguish between worship and worship; the Church does so, very strongly. Supreme homage or worship has, in the language of the schools been denominated *Latria*.¹ There is a lower honor or worship which we are even commanded in the Decalogue to give to superiors and rulers, religious and civil. How much more is such honor owing to angels and saints, whom God is pleased to honor as His friends?

¹ From the Greek *λατρία*,—the worship due to God only;—from *λατρεύω*, to serve, to worship. (See Rock's "Hierurgia," p. 227.)

In the Western Church there was no such difficulty of misinterpretation of the honor paid as there was in the East. Here the devotion has grown with the centuries. The mention of the Angels is frequent in the Psalter, of which the canonical office consists. There is a commemoration of them in the Preface and in the Canon of the Mass and so incorporated was the reverence of them into the daily prayers of the people and the festivities of the Church, that no special day was assigned in which to honor them for some years. Afterwards the 2d of October was made the Feast of the Guardian Angels, setting this special phalanx of the heavenly army aside from the others. But as the Church, gathering the months into her hands, transforms them into spiritual blossoms and with them weaves an unfading wreath to lay at the Tabernacle door, so the month of October is the flower of the angels and during its thirty-one days, they are kept particularly in the minds and hearts of her children.

“White winged angels meet the child
On the vestibule of life,”

And they follow it through all the years allotted to it upon this terrestrial globe; nor does the bright spirit leave its charge until the soul, having been withdrawn from its earthly tenement, receives its sentence, whether for weal or woe.

This teaching regarding the angels is only one of the many charms with which our Mother would charm her children. In fact, the Catholic lives in an ideal world of which those outside the Fold have small conception, a world of ideals and symbols—which elevates, consoles and purifies—a world within this one of human wants and weaknesses, yet above and beyond it and by means of which the Mighty Mother draws her little ones as by silken cords up to the tender Heart of her heavenly Bridegroom.

“Thou art all beautiful, O my Beloved, and there is no spot in thee!” Such is the Church, the Pillar and Ground of the Faith.

III.

The first poet to commemorate these ethereal and intangible creations was the Shepherd-king of Israel. But at the mention of them in connection with the literature belonging to them, one naturally turns to Milton and his immortal epic. To be sure, he gives us angels as grim, stern and solemn as himself and his poem; here and there, however, will break forth a picture of airy grace and beauty which astonishes. He evidently shared St. Thomas' idea regarding the action of the angels in the creation; as in the tenth book of “Paradise Lost:”

“ Such was their song,
While the Creator, calling forth by name
His mighty angels, gave them several charge,
As sorted best with present things.”

This description of the fallen spirits thrills with a horror which fixes rather upon the punishment than the crime, and he portrays his Lucifer more the proud, rebellious mortal than the incarnation of sin. In reading Milton's Satan, we are more inclined to pity than to blame :

“ What time his pride
Had cast him out of heaven with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equalled The Most High.”

Picture the conquering spirits hanging motionless amid the blue empyrean, while with awe-struck vision they watched his fall. And in that fall did some, ere the sulphurous fumes of the fiery lake hid them from their agonized gaze, turn, touched by a too late repentance, one backward glance at the crystal battlements of their lost inheritance, the glory and the beauty of which no human tongue can portray? utter a cry for mercy which mingled and lost itself in the triumphant hosannas of the celestial army?

And Lucifer?

Did an all too late submission come to him with the remembrance of his vacant place, up there, before the Face of God? Or, perhaps, as he, in his unconquered insolence, proclaimed that it were better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven—even his own vaunting words may have aroused the fell despair which was ever after to be his other self and forced him to exclaim :

“ Me miserable ! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath and Infinite despair ?
Which way I fly is hell ; myself am hell ;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.”

The battle over, what joy amid the triumphant choirs ! What sheathing of celestial swords, what massing of heavenly standards. How the archangelic cohorts must have awaked the soft zephyrs of that higher Eden, as, on silvery pinions they swept through the radiant masses to meet and escort the victor to his place before the throne, casting one glance of regret, perhaps, towards the vacant spot where erst resplendent Lucifer shone amid his princely compeers !

Not all the physical perfections yet left to fallen humanity, were they centred in one being, could compare with those of the first of the star-crowned seven. As, however, in the performance of his

Creator's behests, Michael has shown himself to us a young man clothed in full and radiant panoply—so only can we bring him before our mental vision. But even then we dare not raise our eyes to the splendor of that heavenly armor, else we lose all power of future seeing.

Come we now to the earthly Eden, and entering walk beneath the umbrageous branches of the tree of knowledge. The Creator's task is done, and he has supplemented it by the last and loveliest of his handiwork, our fair, first mother, Eve.

Ah, how fair she was! Fair with the beauty of her womanhood, fresh from the hand of her Maker—fairer still with the beauty of that perfect sinlessness—a beauty the like of which was to bless this earth of ours but once again in all the myriads of her daughters—only once again in her, the second Eve, who was to crush the serpent's head and give the world a Saviour. We are left by Holy Writ to imagine only how the angels must have watched and marvelled over the work of these strange six days. That they were not all jealous of the love with which the Son of God even then loved the new creature risen from the dust of the young earth, we know through their subsequent obedient service. But we do not see them in the garden until the last sad hour.

The poets, however, take a greater license: Milton establishes Gabriel upon an alabaster rock near the eastern gate, a vigilant sentinel; to him when "twilight grey hath in her sombre livery all things clad," comes Uriel with his cherubim to keep the night watches. Within, with the eye of faith, we may see them, more numerous than the sands of the sea-shore, crowding around that man and woman. The soft movement of their pinions ruffles the air of Eden; the trees bend and sway to it while they look forth from among their luxuriant foliage; they sweep over the surface of the waters and the streams ripple beneath the stirring of their wings smiling back at them. The light from their benignant faces reflects itself in all nature, and adds to the brilliancy of newly created sun and moon. Entranced, they follow every act, listen to every word, note every footstep. Some, assuming an appearance similar to that of this marvellous pair, but still retaining their ethereal character, alight with airy tread upon the sward and walk beside them, entrancing in their turn the objects of their solicitude by the charming of angelic voices recounting the wonders of the heavenly paradise of which their own is but a faint reflection, Alas! that the cunning of the serpent should evade their loving vigilance!

"What sudden turns,
What strange vicissitudes in the first leaf
Of man's sad history! to-day most happy;
And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject!
How scant the space between the vast extremes!"

Satan having made his first journey round the earth "seeking whom he might devour," disguises himself as an angel of light in order to effect an entrance into the earthly paradise. Thus he deceives the archangel Uriel, whom he finds on guard, since "neither man nor angel can discern hypocrisy, the only evil that walks invisible, except to God alone," who points down to the spot occupied by Eden, to which Satan at once betakes himself. Uriel, having discovered his mistake, descends to warn Gabriel, who, when Uzziel assumes his guard, sends Ithuriel and Zephon to investigate the condition of the garden. They find the tempter "squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve," and the former drives him forth by a touch of his bright spear.

Raphael is sent to warn Adam, and he is thus described :

"Six wings he wore to shade
His lineaments divine; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad came mantling o'er his breast
With regal ornament; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold,
And colors dipped in heaven; the third, his feet
Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,
Sky tintured grain. Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance filled
The circuit wide."

All too soon the idyllic days of innocence are ended. Driven from their home by the very spirits, led by the glorious Michael, who had so lately been their playmates—we see the man and woman pass through the gates of Paradise while

"The world was all before them where to choose."

And the flaming sword revolved above Ithuriel and his cherubim keeping watch and ward over the desecrated portals.

Down through the ages the world echoes with exquisite sensitiveness to the light tread of angel footsteps; all the celestial music which reaches the poor old earth in these her days of decadence is from the passing of the hosts; their pearly wings pulsing upon the air, quicken it with memories of the lost delights of Eden; the glory shining from their radiant faces gives greater brilliance to the sun, throws a reflection even upon the black and lowering, storm-mantled sky.

But in the early days, while God was leading His chosen people to their inheritance, these heavenly visitants were allowed to demonstrate themselves to the weak human eye. For that marvellous dispensation was one of closest intercourse between the Creator and the creature, and the Almighty, since His grandeur

was such that no mortal could look upon it and live, needed heralds and messengers to convey His mandates and his mercies.

Their passings, as recorded in Sacred Scriptures, have been chronicled, from the vision of surpassing beauty which, leaning from the dazzling sky, greeted the despairing eyes of Hagar and brought her hearts-ease, to the radiant form which illumined the prison of St. Peter and wrought his release.

As has been said above, the first of poets to commemorate the angels was the Shepherd-King. In psalm 102, he sings:

“Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, you that are mighty in strength and execute His word, hearken to the voice of His orders.

“Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts; you ministers of His that do His will.”

Again, in the 137th Psalm, he calls upon the angels to witness his worship of a merciful God:

“I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; for Thou hast heard the words of my mouth.

“I will sing praise to Thee in the sight of the angels.”

One of the old English poets, Sandys, has made a pleasing versification of the 148th Psalm:

“You who dwell above the skies
Free from human miseries,
You whom highest heaven embowers,
Praise the Lord with all your powers!
Angels! your clear voices raise!
Him your heavenly armies praise!”

As to the Rabbinical legends of the realms of the air, there is none more exquisite in delicacy of conception, with the added beauty of Longfellow’s magic verse, than that of “Sandalphon.”

Lancisius quotes from Philo a tradition among the Jews. God asked the angels what they thought of the work of His hands? One replied that it was so vast, so perfect, that only one thing was wanting to it; that there should be a clear, mighty and harmonious voice which should fill all the quarters of the world incessantly with its sweet sound in thanksgiving to the Creator. Did God set the spheres rolling to produce this harmony? Perhaps this is the secret of the music of them.

But if fancy may revel amid the opening pages of the world’s history and gather a wealth of imagery around these guardians of and ministers to the wants of the young creation—how much richer and more replete with beauty is the wonderful and awesome epoch of the coming of the lost world’s Saviour? And here, we

know that not the wildest dreaming, not the utmost exuberance of imagination can approach the truth.

And now the flower from the root of Jesse is about to bloom. Heaven and earth are waiting for the marvel. But before the outward manifestation of it the angels are crowding that humble hamlet of lower Galilee under the shadow of Carmel, where is to be found the second marvel of the Creator's handiwork, the one pure being sinless and stainless since the Eden days. In the month Tisri, the first of the Jewish year, and while the incense of holocausts was rising to the face of God in expiation, she of whom it was foretold to exiled Eve that she should avenge her wrongs, is born.

The legend has it that an angel announced to Joachim and Anna, until then childless (which condition, in view of the human motherhood by which the Messiah was to come, was regarded as a disgrace in Israel), that they should have a child who should be blessed throughout the whole earth. But when the promised one was born, although of royal parentage, no less than the blood-royal of David, no earthly pomp or ceremony attended her. Only the angelic choirs chanted her glories and bent in wondering awe before her attributes. For in the supernal beauty which shines forth even in her infant helplessness they see the elected daughter of the Eternal Father; in her unspotted purity the predestined mother of the Eternal Son, and in her precocious wisdom the spouse whom the Holy Ghost will choose unto Himself. But as the link in this golden chain which binds her most closely to the Godhead, do they reverence and rejoice in her perfect purity, her exemption from even the inherited stain—and not more gladly than does she herself. They pay homage to her as their queen, and through all the coming years while the Nazarite maiden is drawing near to womanhood and the fateful hour, they hover over and around her. If the beauty of Eve entranced them, how must they have marvelled at Mary's surpassing grace!

At three years she is taken to the Temple, angels lead her baby feet up the fifteen steps to the altar. This *motif* is a favorite one with the Italian painters. So through all the years of her stay within those sacred walls the early artists have given her the companionship of angels. "They also," it is said, "brought her celestial food—the bread of life and the water of life, from Paradise."

"Pictures of the Blessed Virgin in her girlhood reading the Book of Wisdom while angels watch over her," says Mrs. Jamison, "are often of great beauty."

Fifteen years, as we count time, and then the archangel Gabriel comes to Zachary. How impatiently must this gentle spirit have waited for the intervening six months to pass.

“ He bore the palm
Down unto Mary when the Son of God
Vouchsafed to clothe Him in terrestrial weeds.”

Thus Dante saw him and thus Angelico has painted him.

At the first look of the Omnipotent, indicating His Divine will, the gracious messenger raises his pinions all glowing with the light of the Divine Complaisance above his head, rises upon them above the watching throngs and sweeps through the ether to that small house of Nazareth; standing before her whom he has watched over and loved as only angels love, bending his star-crowned head and veiling his radiant face with his pulsing pinions, he hails her “full of grace!”

The watching angels who have accompanied him wait—as do the mighty hosts, the numberless spirits in the sphere whence they have just descended, as do the millions of the just who languish in that dark abode which is the only rest they have known yet, as does, O marvel of marvels, even the adorable Trinity itself—upon that weak woman’s answer. They know her to be the Immaculate—will she jeopardize that supreme endowment for the glory of a divine motherhood? She questions and is answered, and then—

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”

Hark to the angelic hosannas! They echo down the centuries bearing superhuman strength and heavenly consolation to hearts “weary with dragging the crosses” of an existence otherwise beyond all mortal bearing.

Henceforth it would seem that the courts of the King of kings must be deserted, so dense is the throng of angels in that small corner of the world where dwells the Mystic Rose. They crowd the house at Nazareth all the day, they hover over the slumbers of their queen during the midnight watches, and when she moves abroad surely she of Seba was not more magnificently attended. Angels sustain her footsteps, archangels shadow her with their wings lest the Syrian sun beat upon her head too fiercely, the winds of the Syrian desert assail her form too roughly. The principalities and dominations watch her lest she grow weary, the virtues lead her gently, the powers ward off the evil one who will not believe that earth holds a mortal who is not his lawful prey.

Above, in the blue arch of heaven, the higher choirs chant the praises of the Creator in that He has shown such mercy to man, and has had regard to the humility of this His handmaid; verily is she to be called “blessed.”

The humble cave of Bethlehem is now the centre of attraction to the heavenly hosts. In the deep silence of the midnight hour, whilst animate and inanimate nature slept, a light from heaven

shone over the humble manger and angels worshipped God made man. Leaving the rich and learned of the earth to discover the meaning of the new star seen in the eastern heavens, a message of simplest wording, requiring no interpretation, is sent to the lowly shepherds.

All suddenly, they know not whence he came, a radiant form stands beside them, "and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear." But a melodious voice sounded in their ears speaking words of comfort: "Fear not," said the angel, "for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." And then there appeared a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace."

When the awed listeners to this heavenly harmony spoke, how discordant must not their voices have sounded, even to themselves.

There is no event in all the childhood around which more graceful legends have clustered than the flight into Egypt. Angels are particularly busy here, from the one who roused St. Joseph from his sleep saying: "Arise and take the Child and His mother and fly into Egypt," to the dainty cherubs who poise themselves among the branches of the sycamore trees. Angels lead the ass upon which our Lady rides, and angels bring them food, arrange for their shelter at nightfall, lead the way through the wearying desert and along the barren sea coast.

And when the time is come for the return to Nazareth an angel again leads the way. Did they, for "come the immortals never alone," and we speak of one as it is written, but we know they were countless—did they remember the former Exodus, its tumults, disobediences, and wicked disorders, and their wonderment at the patience of the Almighty?

The helpless infancy is passed, and with His parents He goes up to Jerusalem. We all know of that sad and bewildered searching through those three days and nights. Had it been permitted the angels could in one moment have eased their trouble. May we not imagine the Virgin Mother reproaching them with a reverend familiarity, that they did not, or that they had permitted her and "His father" to depart without their precious charge? But this is one of the mysteries of the Life, as the temptation is, and we may not question.

And afterwards? The record of the next eighteen years is summed up in five words. We would fain know more, our hearts yearn over that sweet group at Nazareth; surely never was womanhood more perfect, motherhood more tender. And far and beyond all reverend homage and loving service rendered by son to parent,

was the filial abnegation of that Boy. For "He was subject to them." That is all. We would question of the ministering spirits something of those precious years, that wonderful childhood, that gracious youth, that benignant early manhood—but all is silence. There we must leave Him in that humble cottage beneath the shadow of the Galilean mountains, with the angels for His play-fellows while He grows in grace with God and man.

The mystery of the Baptism opens up the three years; henceforth in all the journeyings by mountain and valley, by lake and river, the angels throng the world's Saviour with adoring love, seeking to compensate His tender heart for the scorn, neglect, and hatred of His best beloved creatures; seeking also to drown the discord of human coarseness, by those entrancing melodies with which the heaven is echoing; now swelling to the full diapason of the angelic choirs, anon whispering low the liquid tones as of trembling flageolets, of one hovering spirit, they would rock His soul in ecstasy. Imagination presents the thought and love dwells on it caressingly that angels, hovering always over Him, held Him in their arms when the Son of man was weary and would rest; that when night fell upon the mountains of Judea, and the stars mirrored themselves in Genesareth, while the owls hooted amid the palm trees of Galilee and all the world of humanity was wrapped in slumber, the heavenly hosts vied with each other in ministering unto Him. Imagination also pictures the multitude who hung above the City of His Tears, and watched shudderingly the horrors of those last hours. The angel of Gethsemane is not named, we know not who it was who with adoring love swept to the solace of that bleeding agony beneath those gnarled and knotted olive trees, while His chosen ones slept. We do not know even whether it were one of the seven, the star upon his brow dimmed in the eclipse shed over all heavenly things by that mighty sorrow. We cannot think it the martial Michael—rather we picture *him* bending from the crystal battlements with sword half drawn, restrained by the will of Omnipotence and holding back his angelic cohorts by the silence of his own agonized obedience. A moment of expectant doubt pulsates also over the waiting hierarchy when they hear that prayer for the passing of the chalice.

The action of Peter in cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant was witnessed rejoicingly, if we may so speak, and the words of our Saviour's rebuke: "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father and He will give me presently twelve legions of angels?" must have thrilled through the watching hosts as they turned expectantly towards the throne. But what words of human tongue can voice, what reaching of human intelligence can realize the angelic wrath and horror of those onlooking throngs?

The lashes fall upon that tender Flesh while angels' tears fall with them in a helpless pity; the tears fall too upon the thorn-crowned head in a loving effort to cool its fever. The rabble rout, soldiers, Levites, lawyers, followed the cross-laden One up the long ascent; so too do the angels—and when the nails were crushed through these nerves more delicately sensitive than any other of woman born, the crystal drops came down in a very torrent, mingling with the Precious Blood. Hardly could the watchers be restrained from sustaining the sacred Form in their tender arms while the cross is dropped into its socket, thus racking with exquisite agony every joint and fibre. But they may not offer one slightest alleviation beyond their tears. Unable to tear themselves away from the scene, they bow their blanched faces, cover them with their trembling wings and so await the end. Is it possible to imagine a silence of agonized sorrow in God's glad heaven?

But the angels of the Resurrection are radiant with recovered joy; their spotless garments are lustrous with the recovered lights of heavenly rejoicings; and their vibrant hallelujahs fill the air about that place of skulls where so late they hung mute over the tragedy the last cry of which yet throbs along the years in echoes that miss, to us, the despairing cadence which echoes have, in the promises of hope and faith. So too, the celestial vicars who replaced Him on the hill of the Ascension. Henceforth naught of earthly woe can cloud the brightness of their natures, dim the glories of their heaven.

But Mary remains upon the earth and angels still watch and guard her life, when, at length she pays the debt of mortality, they bear her in rejoicing to the throne prepared for her. The legend is that after the crucifixion the Mother dwelt with her foster child, St. John, and her time was spent mostly in pilgrimages to one or the other of the scenes of her Son's passion. One day she experienced intense longing to see her son once more, and presently an angel, clothed in light as with a garment, appeared and said:

“Hail, O Mary! blessed by Him who has given salvation to Israel! I bring thee here a branch of palm gathered in Paradise; command that it be carried before thy bier in the day of thy death; for in three days thy soul shall leave thy body and thou shalt enter into Paradise, where thy Son awaits thy coming.”

Then Mary asks the angel his name, which he does not willingly tell, but says it is the Great and the Wonderful. She also asks that her soul, when delivered from her body, may not be affrighted by any spirit of darkness, and that no evil angel be allowed to have any power over her. Also, that the Apostles

may be united around her before she dies. The angel accedes to her request; the Apostles are scattered, but, says the angel, "He who transported the prophet Habakuk from Judea to Babylon by the hair of his head, can as easily bring hither the Apostles. And fear not thou the evil spirit, for hast thou not bruised his head and destroyed his kingdom?" Then the angel departed into Heaven and the palm branch which he had left behind him shed light from every leaf and sparkled as the stars. The Mother made her preparations and at the same moment John, who was preaching at Ephesus and Peter at Antioch, and all the other Apostles, dispersed about the world, were suddenly caught up by a miraculous power and found themselves before the door of the habitation of their queen.

She thanked and blessed them and gave the palm into St. John's hands. She prayed and they all wept, and about the third hour of the night, while St. John stood at the foot of the bed and St. Peter at the head, a mighty sound filled the house and a delicious perfume. Our Saviour, accompanied by a countless throng of angels, patriarchs and prophets, appeared and surrounded the bed singing hymns of joy. Then our Saviour said: "Arise, my beloved, mine elect! come with me from Lebanon, my espoused; receive the crown that was destined for thee!" And Mary replied: "My heart is ready; for it is written of me that I should do thy will." Again there was singing by the attendant angels, and Mary's soul, leaving her body, was received into the arms of her Son, and by Him was carried into Heaven. The Apostles looked up, saying: "Oh, most prudent Virgin, remember us when thou comest to glory!" And the angels who received her sang: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved? She is fairer than all the daughters of Jerusalem."

The body of the Mother remained on earth, and three among the virgins prepared to wash and clothe it in a shroud. Then the Apostles took her up reverently and placed her on a bier, and John, carrying the celestial palm, went before. Peter intoned the 114th Psalm, "In exitu Israel de Egypto."

On the third day our Saviour said to the angels:

"What honor shall I confer on her who was my Mother according to the flesh?" And they answered: "Lord, suffer not that body which was Thy temple and Thy dwelling-place to see corruption, but place her beside Thee on Thy throne in heaven." And our Saviour consented; and the Archangel Michael brought unto the Lord the glorious soul of our Lady. And the Lord said: "Rise up, my dove, my undefiled, for thou shalt not remain in the darkness of the grave nor shalt thou see corruption," and immediately the soul of Mary rejoined her body and she rose up

glorious from the tomb and ascended into Heaven surrounded and welcomed by troops of angels blowing their silver trumpets, touching their golden lutes and singing and rejoicing as they sang: "Who is she that riseth as the morning, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, and terrible as an army set in array."

Meantime the Apostle John visits the tomb to find it empty, hears the story of the translation from an angel and relates it to the others. One of the Apostles was absent—the same Thomas who had doubted of the risen Saviour. He would not believe the marvellous story and insisted that the tomb should be opened for his inspection. It was found to be full of lilies and roses fresh with the dews and fragrant with the perfumes of Paradise.

Even the pagan Virgil had endeavored to comprehend the natures of these spirits, for he speaks thus of them: "They boast ethereal vigor and are formed from seeds of heavenly birth."

Dante describes the angelic boatman, "the bird of God," gathering into his boat the souls whom Purgatorial fires are to cleanse. Also he saw "forth issuing descend beneath, two angels, with two flame-illumined swords, broken and mutilated of their points," to guard the entrance of Purgatory against the attempts of Satan to enter there. The gate of Purgatory is opened for Dante and his companion by the angel deputed by St. Peter to keep it, and angels lead them about and explain what they see.

He witnesses, while in Paradise, the assumption of the Blessed Virgin by her Son. In the ninth Heaven he sees the three hierarchies, the nine choirs, classified and named by Dionysius the Areopagite, who, having known St. Paul intimately at Athens, heard from his lips many of the revelations made to him when wrapped into the third Heaven.

The place of these hierarchies is in succession beyond the chosen seven who stand before the Throne. They each comprise three choirs.

The first contains the seraphim. Lost in the contemplation of the perfections of their Creator, they are all on fire from love of Him, and from their numbers arises ever the flame of an adoration most pleasing to Him. The cherubim, wisest of the angelic host, chant ever their hymns of praise to Him who gifted them with a wisdom approaching nearest to His own. The thrones, so called because these resplendent angels are raised above all the inferior hierarchies, to whom they carry the mandates of their King, sharing with the seraphim and cherubim the privilege of seeing the truth clearly in God Himself.

The second hierarchy comprises the dominations, the principalities and the powers.

The dominations rule over all the angelic orders charged with the execution of the commands of God.

The principalities receive their orders from the dominations and transmit them to the others.

The powers are invested with a special authority. They are commissioned to remove obstacles that interfere with the execution of the Divine commands; they banish the evil spirits who continually besiege kingdoms, in order to turn them from their appointed end.

The third hierarchy comprise virtues, archangels and angels.

The virtues by their name indicate strength. They preside over the material world and the laws that regulate it, maintaining order in each department.

The archangels have in charge the direction of the government of provinces, dioceses, religious bodies; between them and us exists a constant intercourse, as was shadowed forth by the ladder of Jacob.

The last order is that of the angels. The word means messenger, and is common to all the heavenly spirits, since they are all employed to notify of the Divine thoughts. To this office the higher angels add certain prerogatives from which they derive their peculiar names. The angels of the last choir of the last hierarchy, adding nothing to the ordinary occupation of envoys, retain the simple name. They more directly and intimately watch over the two-fold life of man.

Tasso, languishing in his prison, has visions of angels, and Petrarch was not oblivious of their beauty in his dreams of Laura. Goethe sings of them in the second part of Faust.

Spencer sees their "golden pinions cleave the flitting skies like flying pursuivants." He believed in guardian angels:

"They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love and nothing for reward."

The iconoclastic spirit of the English reformers wrought destruction not only to many priceless works of human art, but would have made of the mind of man a *tabula rasa* to receive only the cold, soulless, hopeless, dark and dreary ideas of God and religion which they had formulated out of a fanaticism which eliminated all of spiritual or of supernatural from the Deity, making Him a being to their own image and likeness—at once repulsive and repulsing. Wordsworth realized the debasing effect and thus voiced his protest:

"Angels and saints in every hamlet mourned,
Ah! if the old idolatry be spurned,
Let not your radiant shapes desert the land,"

And again Mrs. Hemans asks:

“Are ye forever to your skies departed?
 Oh! will ye visit this dim world no more?
 Ye, whose bright wings a solemn splendor darted
 Through Eden's fresh and flowery shades of yore?”

Catholics in the fulness of their triumphant faith realize that these fears are groundless. Angels are as busy to-day with the affairs of men as in the Eden-time, and the folk-lore of Scotland and Ireland is leavened with them. In Catholic Germany the legends regarding the Angels are numerous and very beautiful. Longfellow has embalmed one in his prologue to the “Golden Legend”; the scene is the air around the Strasburg cathedral.

In Italy, as in France and Spain, we meet traditions of these marvellous creatures at every town.

The angels were very near to the tender heart of dear Father Faber, for they flit among his pages as birds amid the leafage of luscious June.

“There are three gorgeous hierarchies, subordinate the lower to the higher, the lower illuminated by the higher and the highest by God Himself. In each hierarchy there are three congenial choirs of various gifts and holiness and power, whose names the Apostles have recorded for us, and of whose diversified functions and loveliness the traditions of theology have much to tell. Each angel, say some theologians, is a species by himself. But in some respects there is an unkindliness about this view; for then many million species of God's reasonable creatures were extinguished with Lucifer, so far as their means of worshipping their good Creator are concerned. Others say that in each choir there are three species, differing from each other in ways of which it is not easy for us to form a conception; while the grace of each angel is distinct and singular. Thus, as it were, by twenty-seven steps, through thrice nine rings adumbrating the Most Holy Trinity, we mount upwards through the angelic kingdom, mingled with the elect sanctity of earth, until we reach the Royal Throne of the angelical vice-gerent, which Lucifer forfeited by his fall, and which is now occupied, some conjecture by St. Michael, some by St. Joseph, in reward for his office of foster-father to the Incarnate Word. See to what a height we have mounted! And if we look back on the magnificence we have traversed, especially those nine oceans of living intellectual light and angelic holiness, how bewildering is the prospect, how entrancing, one while the music, one while the glad silence that reigns all around.

“Higher still. Beyond the vice-gerent's throne come the seven mighty chosen angels that stand ever before the throne of

God. * * * * O what delights does not the Incarnate Word find in the mighty beings and deep spirits and magnificent worship of these glorious creatures. If science could walk the coral depths and explore the sunless caverns of the whole Atlantic and Pacific, the Arctic and Antarctic oceans; if it could note and class and learn the genera and the species of shells and weeds and living things innumerable, a more various fertile world would not be opened to the discoverer than the almost inexhaustibly rich natures and stupendous graces and amazing glories of these seven spirits who are the chosen neighbors of the Throne of God. The soul of the Incarnate Word explores them with consummate complacency, crowns this worship by His blissful acceptance and vouchsafes to receive from their clean thuribles the earthly smelling incense of our human prayers."

By poets and painters Michael is often represented in the armor in which he so frequently showed himself to the chosen people, and also as being typical of his military character. He tramples Lucifer under his feet, holding in his left hand a green palm-branch, and in his right hand a lance, on the top of which is a banner as white as snow, with a red cross in the middle. The church dedicates two days in his honor. The festival of May 8th is to commemorate the apparition of this glorious spirit to the Bishop of Siponto, commanding him to build a church in his honor upon Mt. Gargano, now called Monte San Angelo, in the Neapolitan kingdom. The truth of this vision is vouched for by the chronicle of Sigebert and the traditions of the churches of that country. Its date is 493.

The second festival, in which is included all the angels, is kept on the 29th of September, and has been always observed with great solemnity. On this day the church, built in obedience to the vision spoken of above, was dedicated. On the same day, in 610, Pope Boniface IV. also dedicated a church in Rome to the same archangel. Several other churches in the West were at different times dedicated to St. Michael on this day. Sozomen tells us that Constantine the Great built a famous church in honor of this glorious archangel,¹ called Michaelion, and that in it the sick were often cured and other wonders wrought through the intercession of St. Michael. The historian himself often experienced relief there, and mentions others whom he knew. It was enacted in the laws of Ethelred in England, in the year 1014, "that every Christian who is of age fast three days on bread and water, and raw herbs, before the feast of St. Michael, and let every man go to confession and to church barefoot. Let every priest with his people go in procession three days barefoot, and let every

¹ Butler's Lives, September.

one's commons for three days be prepared without anything of flesh, as if they themselves were to eat it, both in meat and drink, and let all this be distributed to the poor. Let every servant be excused from labor these three days, that he may the better perform his fast, or let him work what he will for himself. These are the three days, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, next before the feast of St. Michael. If any servant break his fast, let him make satisfaction with his hide (bodily stripes), let the poor free-man pay thirty pence, the king's thane a hundred and thirty shillings, and let the money be divided to the poor."¹ Michaelmas day is mentioned among the great feasts of the Saxon Chronicle in the year 1011, in the Saxon Menology of the ninth century, and in the English Calendar.² The Greeks make mention, in their Menæ, of an apparition of Michael at the ancient Colossæ in Phrygia. Michael is to be invoked at the hour of death. His name signifies "WHO IS LIKE GOD?" being the watchword of the conquering hosts. He is constantly referred to as the protector or prince of the Hebrews, the protector of the Jewish Temple as he is now of the Church of God and her supreme head. He is piously believed to have been the guardian of our Saviour's Humanity and in the apportionment which some pious beliefs make of the seven sacraments to the charge of those "who upon their brows the seven planets wear," it is said that he has special care over the sacrament of the Eucharist, inciting to devotion to it, and preventing sacrilege, and that he so revealed himself to St. Eutropius and several others. He is regarded as the shadow of the Father.

The gentle Gabriel, whose name signifies the strength of God, the angel of the Annunciation, as also of the dreaded day of judgment, is represented with a trumpet in his hand or a lily which he holds in his right hand, the left being occupied in pointing to a mirror marked with spots of various colors. To him the sacrament of Baptism is assigned. He is the prince of the kingdom of the Medes, the shadow of the Son, the guardian of our Lady, and thence, naturally, the lover of sacrifice and the inspirer of prayer. His feast day is March 24th, very appropriately.

Raphael, the tender-hearted—the gracious one—is the shadow of the Holy Ghost. His sacrament is Extreme Unction. He is a guide to the traveller, eyes to the blind, medicine to the sick. He is represented as having a fish in his mouth, in his left hand is a box, and he holds Tobias by his right. His dress is generally a close-fitting habit, such as travellers wore, or such as physicians of the time assumed. His name signifies the "healing of God." He is supposed to be the prince of the Persians, and his feast is

¹ Sir Henry Spelman's Councils, and Johnson's Collection of the Canons.

² Butler's Lives, September.

celebrated in October. How radiant with the glory of heaven must he not have appeared when he revealed himself to Tobias as one of the seven who stood before the Throne—so that father and son fell on their faces and so remained for three hours!

These are the only ones whom the Church venerates by name, and with Uriel, mentioned in Esdras, these four are all who are named in Scripture. But St. Boniface tells us that in a council held at Rome under Pope Zacharias in 745, it was decided that the names and attributes which tradition had given to the other three might be recognized by the pious.

Uriel is called the strong companion, and is represented in Christian art as holding a drawn sword in his right hand, the sword resting across his breast, his left hand full of flames. He is the angel of Confirmation.

Sealtiel, the praying spirit, said to be the angel who appeared to Hagar in the wilderness, is depicted with bowed head and downcast eyes, and hands clasped upon his breast. He is the patron of priests and their sacrament, Orders.

Jehudiel, the remunerator, is pictured holding a golden crown in his right hand and a scourge of three black cords in his left; he is supposed to be the angel whom God said He would send before the children of Israel to lead them out of Egypt. His charge is the confessional.

Barachiel, the helper; he it was who rebuked Sara when she laughed. He is painted with the lap of his cloak filled with roses, and is the protector of the married.

The termination *el* of their names implies power, strength, and is synonymous with that by which we call the Almighty—God.

Madam de Stael was once asked, in a spirit of badinage, how it was that the angels were always spoken of in the masculine and appear in the guise of men? She promptly replied:

“Because the union of power with purity constitutes all that we mortals can imagine of perfection.”

But, alas, when Titus fills the valleys of the Kedron and Himmon with his myriad army, and from the heights of Olivet hurls destruction into the doomed city, no angel in celestial armor dight sweeps from the blue Judean sky to draw an unconquerable sword in its behalf! The time for the fulfilment of the awful curse called down upon themselves before the judgment seat of Pilate has come—henceforth the once chosen of God have neither country nor worship. Over people and temple is written “*Ichabod.*”¹

Doubtless there were some among them who remembered their scoffs, long years past, at the prophecy of the son of the carpenter.

¹ The glory has departed.

It is not surprising that, in the ages when art was the handmaid of religion, few painters thought of portraying their queen without her attendant train of angels. Botticelli has an exquisite picture in the Florence gallery of the Blessed One writing her "Magnificat." Her babe is in her lap and her face is the reflection of the words she spoke in such sweet and humble exaltation to Elizabeth. But the shadow of the future is in the faces of the angels who look on with a love thrice tender from the pity of it—as if wondering that she should forget the sword of Simeon. Who has not been held awe-struck by the masterpiece of the Dresden gallery—nay, of the world! *The Madonna di San Sisto?* Surely the Sanzio's brush was guided by an angel's hand! She seems transfigured, the Virgin Mother, at once entirely human and entirely divine; the impersonation of love, of purity, and of benign power. So lightly is she poised upon the air that she needs no other support. But what is it she sees with those dark, dilated eyes, as she gazes into the infinite? Is it that beyond those myriad angels whose adoring faces melt into the softest clouds of distance she recognizes the horror of that mountain top? Does she realize that closely as she may clasp Him to her breast and kiss His rounded limbs and hush His infant slumbers now, the day will come when rough and cruel hands, instinct with the hatred of Lucifer, will hold Him from her—He, whose eyes so like her own, the baby Face reflecting her beauty as in a mirror, seem stricken as by the same terrific vision?

There is a modern Holy Family, by Möller, which appeals to the devotion of all serious hearts, in which the group rests by the wayside and an angel stands before them playing upon a violin, the music of which, with the sight of the Spirit, is audible only to the Boy, while the Mother and St. Joseph watch his wrapt expression wonderingly, tenderly.

The visions of angels vouchsafed to saints would fill a volume by themselves were they all collected. Suarez recounts many revelations regarding these celestial beings, and he it is who says that at the last day our Saviour Judge will be borne by the choir of thrones, "those beings of overwhelming restful strength and loveliness, resplendent and inexpressible." Surin always saw these thrones around the Blessed Sacrament at Mass, as did Angela di Foligno, who also tells us that their numbers are countless.

"There seems a strong inclination," says Father Faber, "to connect the choir of thrones in some special manner with the Blessed Sacrament. When St. Mary Magdalen di Pazzi goes through the nine choirs to obtain some special grace from each, she says she has recourse to the thrones to put her into the arms of the Incarnate Word, especially in His sacramental union with His espoused souls. Angela di Foligno after her vision calls the

thrones the 'society' of the Blessed Sacrament. So also Boudoin in his life of Surin mentions the continual visions of the thrones which he had in connection with the Mass."

We may be very sure that the angels are in attendance upon their Lord in every sanctuary. Numerous as a congregation may be during the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, the unseen assembly is larger still. Nor can all the pomp of vestments and ceremony, of lights and music, of incense and flowers, approach the magnificence of their ritual. Thus do they guard the Fortress of the Faith, even as yonder bronze Michael watches from the apex of Hadrian's mole.¹

WANTED—A NEW TEXT-BOOK.

THE Catholic *parochial schools* in this country were begun without any special plan or system, as the wants of the young in a particular spot required, and both course of instruction and the building where the children were gathered were controlled by the means of the congregation which heroically assumed the burden in order to save their children from perversion by direct or indirect proselytism in the schools which the State afforded.

Gradually, however, the Catholic body has become thoroughly imbued with the conviction that the State schools are and will remain thoroughly Protestant in management, in officers, and, to a great extent, in teachers, as well as in general tone, in class-books and oral instruction; and such they will remain until the not remote day when Protestantism itself will be made a scoff in them, and with it all revealed religion.

Now, when Catholics complain of any more than usually gross outrage on their feelings in the public schools, Protestant ministers and fanatics from their flocks rush forward with as much zeal as though their churches, their publishing houses of denominational books and papers were in jeopardy. Their very action is in itself a proof that a large part of the people regard the public schools as part of the Protestant system to be upheld at all hazards. Recent events in Philadelphia and Boston show this clearly.

¹ Placed there to commemorate the apparition of this Archangel during a grand penitential procession ordered by Pope Gregory the Great, in 593, in order to obtain relief from the plague.