

THE HOLY ANGELS.

A correspondent of the *Church Times*, who recently paid a visit to the Birmingham Oratory, gives from memory an account of a sermon of Dr. Newman on the subject of the Holy angels. He says the doctor described the immensity of time in which they had existed, and said that they were in their state of probation and trial. "In the beginning—ages before 'the beginning,' we have recorded in the Bible—their two great attributes were knowledge and power. The former was exemplified by their different reception of knowledge to man, man toiling for information, acquiring it step by step and fact by fact, angels by instantaneous conception knowing all things. The latter was illustrated by the momentary destruction of eighty thousand men in the army of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, by the destroying angel, and the similar annihilation of all the first-born in Egypt. Their difference of nature was shown in the fact that, whereas to them the sight of God is life, to sinful man it would be death.

At first angels were not permitted to see God; they were undergoing a probation, the manner of which we know not, but we know that the cause of their fall was pride. No doubt they had failed in faith again and again, but had they preserved humility all would have been forgiven them. From the seraphs, the highest order of angels, the Devil had fallen; fallen, because he had been lifted up with pride and arrogance to deem himself equal with God. With him fell the third part of the angels as narrated by St. John in the Apocalypse, xii, 4:

—"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of Heaven and did cast them to the earth":

We are told that there are nine orders of angels, of which the highest are the seraphim and the cherubim, the lowest archangels and angels. With our dim senses we cannot conceive them as they are; man has imagined them as with form and wings, but they are essentially ethereal and spiritual. It is necessary to use metaphor and allegory concerning them as with other things, without it the mind of man could not grasp the possibility of their existence. We even speak of God in the language of allegory, as with hair as white as snow, and of Jesus as His Right Hand. Respecting the mighty conceptions of God and the utterances of His designs, man was likened to a fly walking up a great wall. It has no sense of the uses of the wall, it cannot conceive the whole of which it forms part, it has only knowledge of the tiny portion covered by its own feet. Until the day of eternity the fulness of the plans of God will be hid from us, we can now only grasp that which is possible, utilise that which is within our power and wait for the fruition. The war in heaven mentioned in the Apocalypse, "And there was war in Heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels," is now transferred to earth. The battle still is waged, horrible thought, and mankind is comparatively indifferent to its result, although that result is fraught with the most momentous issues in the destiny of each one. Every means are used to tempt us astray, temptation assumes its most alluring form, the