

Seattle University

ScholarWorks @ SeattleU

---

Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin  
Mortimer Standing

Series II: Literary Productions, ca. 1919-1979;  
n.d.

---

July 2022

## Box 09, Folder 42 - "Saint Michael and All the Angels" (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/standing-manuscripts>

---

### Recommended Citation

Standing, Edwin Mortimer, "Box 09, Folder 42 - "Saint Michael and All the Angels" (E.M.S.)" (2022).  
*Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing*. 93.  
<https://scholarworks.seattleu.edu/standing-manuscripts/93>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Series II: Literary Productions, ca. 1919-1979; n.d. at ScholarWorks @ SeattleU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Manuscripts, ca. 1921-ca.1966; n.d., Edwin Mortimer Standing by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ SeattleU.

Becomes Topical on Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>

Michaelmas or  
or The Feast of

"SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL THE ANGELS"

---

(published in G.K.'s Weekly.)

by

Mortimer Standing .

---

Length

About (1600 words)

## SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL THE ANGELS .

---

Angels , it must be confessed , are rather out of fashion in the world of to-day , their place - presumably - having largely been taken by aeroplanes . One wonders what proportion of the population of this country will give a serious thought to these celestial beings as Michaelmas comes round again - the Feast of Saint Michael and all the Angels .

It was very different in the Middle Ages, when Angels occupied a prominent place in the minds of both illiterate and learned alike . Even in Shakespeare's time they were still "in vogue " ; they are regarded by him as part of the recognised supernatural background of human life . When the Ghost appears to Hamlet he exclaims quite naturally , "Angels and ministers of grace defend us " ; and when the Prince of Denmark dies in Horatio's arms, the latter ~~his friend's~~ last words to him are, "Good -night , sweet prince , the flight of angels sing thee to thy rest " .

But now-a-days , as a practical proposition, to the man in the street the angels no longer count . Science has exterminated them . He regards them - if he ever thinks of them at all - merely as a pious superstition long out-grown . To him they are simply imaginary beings , fabulous as the Phoenix , mythological as the Minotaur .

But is he right ? It may be that the angels will have the laugh over us in the end ; and the laughter of a fallen angel is not a thing to be encouraged .

"But there is no room for the angel in the universe as we know it to-day ", says the Scientist ,as he gazes at the stars through his telescope or chips bits off the atom with his electric rays .

But again - why not ? .An angel by its very nature does not occupy any space at all ,as it is a purely spiritual being ~~by definition~~ . It would be useless therefore to expect science to discover - what Shakespeare accurately describes as ~~their~~ "Sightless substances " ; ~~that~~ <sup>however</sup> That is no reason for denying their existence ; for science deals with the world of extended matter , ~~and~~ not with spirit .

It is surprising what ignorance prevails to-day concerning the traditional teaching about angels , their nature and mode of existence . You may hear , for instance , somebody addressing a child as follows , "Your dear Aunt Matilda -God rest her soul - is an angel in heaven now " . Far be it from us to hazard an opinion in so delicate a matter as Aunt Matilda's last resting place ! but one thing is certain -viz.that if she is in Heaven , she is not, and never will be there as an angel .

For angels and <sup>u</sup>human beings - even in Heaven - <sup>form</sup> ~~form~~ two entirely and eternally different orders of Being . They differ so essentially that it is impossible even to imagine that one should ever merge into the other . The fundamental difference is this , it is essential to the completed nature of man to have both soul and body ( hence , by the way the

doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body ) ~~is~~ An angel , on the other hand, is a purely spiritual being and has no body .

"But surely ", exclaims the incredulous reader , "Angels - assuming they exist at all - must have a body . For, if there is any truth in the Biblical narratives, it is unquestionable that angels appeared visibly , and spoke audibly - witness for example the angel of the Annunciation " . The answer to that is that an angel can assume or put on a visible form - for a special purpose - as one can put on a coat ; but it is not essential to its nature .

Christian art , it is true , has usually depicted angels in the form of human beings ; generally with the addition of wings ; but this form of representation is only symbolical . They are depicted in human form , because, like human beings ~~is~~, as opposed to the animals - they have a rational nature . The wings, too, are purely symbolical , <sup>They</sup> ~~and~~ represent the idea of speed ; but of course an angel <sup>Does</sup> ~~has~~ not really <sup>possess</sup> ~~get~~ wings - how could it, if it has no body to attach them to ? . Wings without a body ~~is~~ would, in some respects, be a more accurate representation of the angelic nature ; but this again would be misleading , as it might give the suggestion of speed without intelligence - like a shooting star or a ray of light .

<sup>f</sup>Swiftness is of the very essence of these denizens of the pure ether - unimaginable swiftness - of insight , of decision , of action . Our Lord said of Lucifer that He beheld

him fall " like lightning " from Heaven .

It is because of the clarity and swiftness with which the angelic intellect works - unhampered by any body - that its decisions - once made - are complete and irrevocable . That is why when the Prince of the Angels fell , he fell - "never to rise again " . So also was it with those unhappy spirits who <sup>as Marlowe says</sup> "in aspiring pride and insolence "

"Conspired against our God with Lucifer",

"And are for ever damned with Lucifer " .

However - to quote Shakespeare again - "Angels are bright still , though the brightest fell "; and it is an impoverished <sup>ished</sup> view of the Universe that finds no place for these glad ethereal messengers , of whom it was said , "He made His ministers a flame of fire " .

Angels are one piece with the Gospel story , being inextricably woven into its very texture . To give but a few <sup>ex</sup>amples :-an angel announces the coming of Christ ; a celestial choir sings at his birth ; angels minister to Him after His Temptation , and in his Agony in the Garden . Two men <sup>in</sup> "in dazzling apparel " , appear to the disciples at the Resurrection , and an angel is present , also , after the Ascension .

In His teaching Christ takes them for granted ; and refers to them on many occasions . "There is more joy amongst the angels in Heaven etc."... .He says He has only to pray to

His Father and He will send Him "even now more than twelve legions of angels ". In Heaven we are told there is no marrying or being given in marriage as with the angels in Heaven . Christ speaks of the little children "whose angels do always behold the face of your Father who is in Heaven ".

"Here again " - says the sceptical reader ;" we have nothing more than a superstitious relic of a credulous and unscientific age mixed up with a historical narrative ". Angels never appear now-a-days , <sup>he says</sup> and the world carries on all right without them ".

The world still goes on , it is true , but we have no scientific proof that it goes on without their assistance . It may be that the poet sees more clearly than the scientist :-

"The angels keep their ancient places ,  
Turn but a stone , and start a wing!  
'T is ye , ' tis your estranged faces  
That miss the many-splendoured thing ".

"But if angels do exist " , it may be asked " , what do they do ?" . Surely , if one thinks for a moment , there is ample scope for their activities even in the physical world , quite apart from the supernatural . What are the laws of Nature ? They are really no more than a catalogue of observations describing the manner in which things happen in the material universe . They do not in the least explain why or even how things happen . What keeps the ~~stars~~ <sup>planets</sup> in their courses Gravity ! But what is gravity ? . No one knows . Who keeps the atoms true to their appointed affinities ? Who paints the flowers in every meadow ? Who looks after the laws of heredity , or

the mutations of the species ? Who forms each separate snow crystal ; eagles <sup>each</sup> wing or insect's eye " .

"Oh " says the scientist , " these things all go by Natural Laws ". As if that <sup>were</sup> ~~is~~ an ultimate explanation ! Who looks after the laws themselves and sees that they are carried out . "I viewed them ( the angels ) , " says Newman in his Apologia , "not only as the ministers employed by the Creator in the Jewish and Christian dispensations , as we find on the face of Scripture , but as carrying on , as Scripture also implies , the Economy of the Visible World .

"I considered them as the real causes of motion , light , and life , and of those elementary principles of the physical universe , which , when offered in their development to our senses , suggest to us the notion of cause and effect , and of what we call the laws of nature " .

"But Newman , " it may be objected , "had an orthodox mind . It was his business to try and squeeze evrything in heaven and earth into the old traditional system . "

It is true that Newman was a Catholic , and it also true that in Catholic countries the angels still "keep their ancient places " . In fact every day , and in every country , at the end of the Mass the following prayer is said :-

" Holy Michael , Archangel , defend us in the day of battle ; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil - may God rebuke him we humbly pray - and so thou , Prince of the heavenly host , by the power of God , thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits , who wander through the world for the ruin of souls " .



The cult of the Holy Angels is not dead , and will never die ; it will revive again <sup>every</sup> in this country and flourish as before . In the atmosphere of rationalism in the seventeenth century , and of materialism in the nineteenth , the eyes of faith were blinded , and men saw not the host of heaven encamped round about .

Then came a day when all that was worth keeping in Christian Europe hung in the balance , when the travail of centuries seemed about to be swept away , and from ~~the~~ the darkest hour of that agony there sprang up the shining Legend of the Angels of Mons .

:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-:~::~:-

Mortimer Standing