SECTION V.

I.

17. THE SKY.

IT is a strange thing how little in gĕnèral people know about the sky. It is the part of creätion in which nature has dône mōre for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evidènt pûrpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her.

2. There are not many of her other works in which some mōre material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not ănswered by ĕvèry part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, so far as we know, be answered, if once in three dāys, or thêreabouts, a great ugly black rain-cloud wĕre brought up over the blue, and every thing well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew.

3. And instead of this, thêre is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glōry after glory, and working still upon such ĕxquisite and constant principles of the mōst pĕrfect beauty, that it is quite cĕrtaĭn it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual plĕasure. And ĕvèry man, wherever placed, however far from other sōurces of ĭnterèst or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly.

4. The noblèst scenes of the ĕarth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them, he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them; but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not "too bright, nor gŏŏd, for human nature's daily fōōd;" it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing it and purifying it from its drŏss and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes caprĭcious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together; almōst human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tĕndernèss, almost dĭvīne in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us,

is as distinct, as its ministry of chăstisemènt[1] or of blessing to what is mortal is essential.

5. And yĕt we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations; we look upon all by which it speaks to us mōre clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, ōnly as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration.

6. If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity,[2] we turn to the sky as a last resōurce, which of its phenomena[3] do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another it has been warm. Who, among the whōle chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horĭzon[4] at noon yesterday? Who saw the nărrōw sunbeam that came out of the south and smote upon their summits until they melted and moldered ăwāy in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves?

7. All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or if the apathy[5] be ever shaken ŏff, even for an instant, it is ōnly by what is grōss, or what is extraordinary;[6] and yĕt it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highèst characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice.

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[1] **Chastisement** (chăs′ tĭz ment), pain inflicted for punishment and correction.

[2] **In` si pĭd′ i tў**, want of taste, spirit, or animation.

[3] **Phe nŏm′ e na**, appearances; those things which, in matter or spirit, are apparent to, or apprehended by observation.

[4] **Ho rĭ′ zon**, the circle which bounds that part of the earth's surface which may be seen by a person from a given place; the place where the earth and sky seem, to the beholder, to meet.

[5] **Ap′ a thў**, want, or a low degree, of feeling; calmness of mind incapable of being ruffled by pleasure, pain, or passion.

[6] **Extraordinary** (ĕks trạr′ dĭ nā rĭ), out of the common course; more than common.

8. They are but the blunt and low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the călm, and the perpetual—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yĕt vary etĕrnally, which are never wanting, and never repeated, which are to be found always yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given.

9. It seems to me that in the midst of the material nearnèss of the heavens Gŏd means us to acknowledge His own immediate presence as visiting, judging, and blessing us. "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped, at the presence of God." "He dŏth set His bōw in the cloud," and thus renews, in the sound of ĕvèry drooping swąth of rain, His promises of everlasting love.

10. "In them hath He set a *tabernacle* for the sun;" whose burning ball, which without the firmamènt would be seen as an intolerable and scorching circle in the blacknèss of vacuity,[1] is by that firmament surrounded with gorgeous service, and tempered by mēdiatōrial[2] ministries; by the firmament of clouds the golden pavement is spread for his chariot wheels at morning; by the firmament of clouds the temple is built for his presence to fill with light at noon; by the firmament of clouds the purple veil is closed at evening round the sanctuary of his rest; by the mists of the firmament his implacable[3] light is dīvīdèd, and its separated fiercenèss appeased into the sŏft blue that fills the depth of distance with its bloom, and the flush with which the mountains burn as they drink the overflowing of the dayspring.

11. And in this tabernacling of the unendurable sun with men, through the shadows of the firmament, Gŏd would seem to set fōrth the stooping of His own majesty to men, upon the *throne* of the firmament. As the Creātor of all the worlds, and the Inhabiter of eternity, we can not behold Him; but as the Judge of the earth and the Preserver of men, those heavens are indeed His dwelling place.

[1] **Va cū′ i tў**, space unfilled or unoccupied; emptiness; void.

[2] **Mē′ di a tō′ ri al**, belonging to a mediator, or one who interposes between parties at variance to reconcile them.

[3] **Im plā′ ca ble**, not to be appeased or pacified; relentless.

12. "Swear not, nēither by heaven, for it is Gŏd's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool." And all those passings to and fro of fruitful shower and grateful shade, and all those visions of silver palaces built about the horī′zon, and voices of moaning winds and threatening thunders, and glōries of colored robe and cloven ray, are but to deepen in our hearts the acceptance, and distĭnctnèss, and dearnèss of the simple words, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

RUSKIN.

JOHN RUSKIN, an English author, was born in London in February, 1819. He was graduated in 1842 at Christchurch College, Oxford, having gained the Newdigate prize for English poetry. He has devoted much time to the study of art, including painting and architecture. His first volume of "Modern Painters" was published in 1843; his second, treating "Of the Imaginative and Theoretic Faculties," in 1846; and his fifth and last volume of the series in 1860. He has published many works, including lectures, and contributions to periodicals, on drawing, architecture, painting, etc. He is noted for the rhetorical brilliancy of his style, the eloquence of his descriptive passages, and his positive though sometimes paradoxical views. Among his more recent publications are "Sesame and Lilies," in 1864; "The Crown of Wild Olive," and "The Ethics of the Dust," in 1866; and "Queen of the Air," in 1869.

II.

18. THE CLOUD.

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsty flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet birds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under;
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

2. I sift the snow on the mountaĭns below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers
Lightning, my pilot, sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,

It struggles and howls at fits.
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

3. The sanguine[1] sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead.
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings;
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

4. That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,

[1] **Sanguine** (săng' gwin), having the color of blood; red; warm.

Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

5. I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

6. I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I can not die.
For after the rain, when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams,
Build up the blue dome of air—
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,[1]
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and upbuild it again. SHELLEY.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, an English poet of great genius, was born in Sussex county, England, in 1792. Brought up in ignorance of the true Church, his mind early rejected the incongruities which were presented to him as the Christian faith, and he fell into an absolute unbelief, which has thoroughly vitiated many of his poems. There are others, however, which will always retain their place in literature, as among the most beautiful productions of English genius. After a brief and unhappy life, Shelley was drowned in the Gulf of Spezzia, in July, 1822.

[1] **Cĕn' o taph**, an empty tomb erected in honor of some deceased person; a monument erected to one who is buried elsewhere.

III.

19. NATURE THE HANDMAID OF FAITH.

NATURE'S VOICE is so clear and powerful that even Socrates,[1] after all his arguments to prove the superiority of the city to the country, was no sooner seated peaceably in the cool shade of the plane-tree, on the banks of the Ilissus,[2] than he confessed that he felt the sweet influence of that retreat. "O, dear Phædrus!" he exclaims; "do I seem to you, as to myself, to be experiencing a divine impression?" And his companion replies, "Truly, O Socrates, contrary to custom, a certain flow of eloquence seems to have borne you away." And he resumes, "Hear me, then, in silence: for in fact this place seems to be divine."

2. This loving familiarity with nature was inseparable from men in whose hearts resided so deep a tone of the eternal melodies; but so also was the conviction that experience had given to St. Augustine, that it was not nature alone, or the beauties and delights of earth, that could ever satisfy the soul of man: that which it seeks is the true and supreme joy which, as St. Bernard says, "is derived not from the creature, but from the Creator, which, when received, no one can take from it—to which, in comparison, all gladness is affliction; all tranquillity, pain; all sweetness, bitterness; all that can delight, vexation."

3. The pretended revelations of nature, independent of that tradition by which society exists, are but the empty boasts of a vain philosophy. Left in the presence of nature alone, uninformed and unsanctified, man degenerates rapidly into a savage state. Without religious worship, which is the realizing of the abstract ide'a of the divinity, that idea would soon be effaced from his thoughts; and, as Lord Bacon says, "No light of nature extendeth to declare the will and true worship of God." However conducive to the physical enjoyments of man, experience shows that a life in the country, without the constant resources of the Catholic religion and its rites, becomes in

[1] **Sŏc'ra tēs**, the most celebrated of the Grecian philosophers, born near Athens, between 471 and 469 B.C.; poisoned himself there, by order of his fellow-citizens, in 399.

[2] **Il ĭss'us**, a river near Athens.

the end completely a pagan life, natural in its motives as well as in its pursuits and pleasures.

4. Without an altar, not the shade of the lofty groves, not the soft meadows, not the streams descending from the rocks, and, clearer than crystal, winding through the plain, can sanctify the soul of man. Left in the presence of nature alone, it faints and becomes like earth without the dew of heaven; it is oppressed by the contemplation of that vast immensity; it loses its tranquillity and its joy. Man in himself can find no rest or peace: and how should he find repose in the works of nature, when these are themselves forever restless? The fire mounts in a perpetual course, always flickering and impatient; the air is agitated with conflicting winds, and susceptible[1] of the least impulse; the water hurries on and knows no peace; and even this ponderous and solid earth, with its rocks and mountains, endures an unceasing progress of degradation,[2] and is ever on the change.

5. Besides, how should spirits of human kind find content in nature when, as the Stăg'irīte[3] proclaims, "Nature is in most things only the slave of man"? Only in his Creator has the creature present rest, and in the pledge of grace, revealed supernaturally from on high, has he eternal peace, immortal felicity. We must leave the laurels, and the fountains, and the swans, and all the harmonies which resound along the margins of rivers, and we must enter the streets with the multitude, in quest of that temple of peace where the Lamb of God is offered up for sinners.

6. Abandoned to nature, the man who is endowed with a delicate and sentimental soul is found to breathe only the vague desires of the modern poet, whose ideal may be seen in that Burns,[4] of whom we read that "he has no religion; his heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no tem-

[1] **Sus cĕp'ti ble**, capable of admitting influence or change.

[2] **Dĕg'ra dā'tion**, a gradual wearing down, or wasting.

[3] **Stăg'i rīte**, a surname given to Aristotle, a Grecian philosopher, and the most famous of the pupils of Plato, from Stagi'ra, in Macedonia, where he was born, B.C. 384. He died in Chalcis, B.C. 332.

[4] **Robert Burns**, a Scotch poet, born at Ayr, Jan. 25, 1759; died at Dumfries, July 21, 1796.

ple in his understanding; he lives in darkness and in the shadōw of doubt; his religion at best is an anxious wish."

7. The error of the modern poets consists in their not viewing the visible world in union with the mysteries of faith, and in supposing that a mere description of its external forms can satisfy even the thirst after poetic beauty, which is inherent[1] in our nature. Dante[2] is blamed by them for mixing scholastic theology with his song; but it is precisely this very mixture which gives that charm to it which attracts and captivates the thoughtful heart.

8. For nature alone can not suffice even the mere poetic imagination; and in Paradise itself man could not be happy if God or His angels did not visit him. The poor insatiate moderns look around from their fairy halls, and inhale the ambrosial aspect; but do they not sometimes lament that, when evening sinks o'er the earth, so beautiful and soft, there sounds no deep bell in the distant tower, no faint dying-day hymns steal alŏft from cloistered cells, to make the fŏrest leaves seem stirred with prayer?

9. Their own poet represents his hunter looking from the steep promontory upon the lake, and exclaiming, "What a scene were here, could we but see the turrets of a convent gray on yŏnder meadōw!"

"For when the midnight moon should lave
Her fŏre*hĕ*ad in the silver wave,
How solemn on the ear would come
The holy matin's distant hum;
While the deep peal's commanding tone
Should wake in yonder īslet lone
A sainted hermit from his cell,
To drop a bead with every knell."

10. Sweet is the breath of morning; but when so sweet as dūring those early walks between wayside paintings of the

[1] **In hēr'ent**, inborn; natural.

[2] **Dăn'te Alighieri** (ä le ĝe ā're), an Italian poet, author of the *Divina Commedia*, the *Inferno*, and the *Vita Nuova*, born in Florence, May, 14, 1265; died in Ravenna, Sept. 14, 1321. He is said to be the first poet whose whole system of thought is colored by a purely Christian theology.

sacred Passion, to the first mâss of the Cap'uçhïns',[1] whose convent crowns the towering rock, or is embosomed in the odoriferous grove?

"The youth of green savannahs[2] spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fâiry crowds
Of islands, that together lie,
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds."

Lovely is this painting of your Wordsworth, but would it acquire no fresh charm from thinking of those convents which might cover them, as in those islands of the Adriăt'ic gulf, seen from the towers of Venice, and from the music of those bells, which would sound along the shore for the Angelus or the Benediction? Might not the Vesper hymn suggest a sweeter image than occurs in the Virgilian line, which speaks of the hour in which begins the first rest of wretched mortals?

11. Contem'plate again the seasons of the year; see what a charm descends upon the enamelled garden from its reference to the altar; for why, cries the tender poet, "O flowers, raise ye your full chălices to the light of morning, why in the damp shade exhale those first per'fumes which the day breathes? Ah, close them still, flowers that I love; guard them for the incense of the holy places, for the ornament of the sanctuary. The sky inŭn'dates you with tears, the eye of the môrn makes you fruitful; you are the fragrant incense of the world, which it sends up to God."

12. Sweet is it to recline, composed in plăcid peace, upon the shady lawn, where violet and hyacinth, with rich inlay, embroider the ground, and to hearken to the voice of some wild minstrel, who sings by the clear stream which flows through the meadōw on a summer's day; but sweeter still to hear the litanies and hymns of Holy Church rise from the midst of waving corn, when her annual rogations[3] implore a blessing upon

[1] **Căp'ū chins'**, Franciscan mŏnks.

[2] **Sa văn' nahs**, plains covered with grass.

[3] **Ro gā'tions**, the prayers imploring a blessing on the new fruits of the earth, which are said on the three days before the feast of the Ascension.

the first fruits of the earth, and when the crŏss and banner of her bright processions glitter through the darksome foliage.

13. Nor are thy reviving spŏrts, innocent and playful youth, insensible to the universal influence of the Church's season. Well I know how dear to the bold swimmer is the plunge into the clear blue flood of the impĕtuous Rhone, which hŭrries him along amidst frŏth and waves, spōrting as in a bed of waters, or the fall from those projecting rocks which stand at the entrance of the Gulf of Lecco, under that noble promontory on which stood the Tragædia of Plĭny; but there is to him a sweeter moment, when winter first departs, and he hās*tens* to the remembered pool, alŏng the embowered banks of the bright stream which first hears the sweet bird that härbingers[1] the spring, and there găthers those budding oziers, which each returning year our Mother Church pŭts into his hand to serve as pälms, to be borne on that day of mystic triumph when she celebrates the entrance of the Son of God into Jerusalem.

14. These are the resŏurces of a northern clime; but yet, methinks, even thy stately fŏrests, noble Valencia, where innumerable old and lŏfty palm trees shade the shore of Alĭeănt, would lose hälf their interest to the Christian eye, if their branches were not yearly thinned for that solemn festival, and sent in offering to the Eternal City. In a country stripped and dismantled by the modern phĭlŏsophy, one lives ōnly in visible presence of what pässes, like the leaves of the trees, or the flowers of the field; and without very extraordinary grace, the prŏgress of seasons and of years is felt by the noblest dispositions, which are the most apt for ĕvèry change, with an emotion of deeper and deeper mel'ancholy; but in a Catholic land one consorts continually with things that never die; and as one grows older, one only feels as if endowed with higher and higher privileges, which are to be crowned at length in the last supernal state, to which death is but a momentary passage.

Abridged from DIGBY.

KENELM H. DIGBY, an English author, born in 1800. His principal work, "*Mores Catholici*, or Ages of Faith," was published in 1845. In it he designed to show that the middle ages were so deeply permeated with the spirit of faith, that the Beatitudes were the ideal on which the more fervent Christians of that time actually molded their lives, while to all men that ideal seemed the only one admissible as an aim worthy to be striven for. He has accomplished this design in a manner truly admirable. The volumes of the "*Mores Catholici*" are in themselves no inadequate library, so ponderous are they with out-of-the-way learning, and so rich in quaint imagery, picturesque conceit, and poetic phraseology.

[1] **Har'bin gers**, foreruns; announces.

IV.

20. LIMITATIONS OF NATURE.

ALL the long summer day
I watched the far-off hills:
The blinding sunlight fell between,
And thrilled with life the meadōws green,
And in white splendor lay
On cloud, and rock, and falling mountain rills.

2. Sparkling with light and dew,
The trees waved in the wīnd,
And each crisp leaflet seemed a lake
In whose green breast the sun did make
Itself a mirror—blue
The river gleamed, the bending boughs behind.

3. A solitary bird
Flew slowly through the air;
Sweet summer breezes lightly smote
The grain, and butterflies afloat
Seemed meadōw blossoms, stirred
Stem-free, and lightly poising, drifted fair.

4. Yet brooding, vague unrest
Fell slowly on me—seemed
More sad the glōwing life and light
Than grayest gloom or darkest night,
And beauty did sug̃gest
The buôy̆ant life which gains not what it dreamed.

5. For when my heart leaped up,
Obedient to the hills,
And strove to pierce through light a way
Unhindered, to the perfect day,
The blue peaks bădе me stop
And hear the voice which through their silence thrills.

6. "Lo," said the mountain strŏng,
"I tower above you high;
Below me drift the mist and cloud;
Yet o'er them pales my fŏrehĕad proud,
Dies my exultant song,
For far above, unreached, spreads still the sky.

7. "I rise, but with me take
My prison-house: the pines
Fast rōōted in my granite rock,
The streams that fall with thund'rous shock,
The greenly-shadōwed lake,
Rise, too, and hold me fâst in rigid lines.

8. "Up, if thou wilt—yet know
I call thee not; for I,
Fixed in mid air, forever pine
To break the limits that confine:
High to thee seems my snow,
Yet far beneath the white stars dŏth it lie.

9. "Nay, though thou climbst my side,
To peaks by man untrod,
Thou shalt not leave thyself behind,
Nor e'er that misty summit find,
Whose last height gained, still wide
Around, above, beneath thee, lies not God."

V.

21. VANITY OF VANITIES.

IN childhood, when, with eager eyes,
The season-mĕasured year I viewed,
All, garbed in fâiry guise,
Pledged constancy of good.

2. Spring sang of heaven; the summer flowers
Let me gaze on and did not fade;
Even suns o'er autumn's bowers
Hĕard my strŏng wish, and stayed.

3. They came and went—the short-lived four;
Yet as their varying dance they wove,
To my young heart each bore
Its own sure claim of love.

4. Far different now; the whirling year
Vainly my dizzy eyes pursue;
And its fair tints appear
All blent in one dusk hue.

5. Why dwell on rich autumnal lights,
Spring-time, or winter's social ring?
Long days are fireside nights,
Brown autumn is fresh spring.

6. Then what this world to thee, my heart?
Its gifts nor feed thee nor can bless;
Thou hast no owner's part
In all its fleetingnèss.

7. The flame, the storm, the quaking ground,
Earth's joy, earth's terror, naught is thine:
Thou must but hĕar the sound
Of the still voice dĭvīne.

8. O priceless art! O princely state!
E'en while by sense of change opprest,
Within to antedate[1]
Heaven's age of fearless rest. NEWMAN.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN was born in London, February 21, 1801. He was graduated at Oxford in 1820, and in 1824 he became a clergyman of the Church of England. At the time of what is known as the "Oxford movement," he became one of the leaders in the attempt to revive Catholic doctrine and practices in that church. Repeated disappointments and prolonged investigations finally brought about his conversion to the Catholic and Roman Church, and he was received into its communion in 1845. He was ordained in Rome, and entered the Oratorian Congregation. In 1848 he published "Loss and Gain," a religious novel; "Sermons to Mixed Congregations," in 1849; "Lectures on Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Submitting to the Catholic Church," in 1850; "Callista, a Sketch of the Third Century," in 1857; "Apologia pro Vita Suâ," his best known work, in 1864; and a philosophical treatise, "An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent," in 1870. This is not, however, a complete list of his writings since his conversion; they have been numerous, and on account of the urbanity of their tone and their peculiarly felicitous style, not less than for their lucid and profound reasoning, have commanded an attention from readers of all shades of belief which no other writer of our generation has received.

[1] An'te dāte, to anticipate.