

When, finally, at the close of the fourth century, the art of poetry, in its grander and nobler forms, faded away, as if exhausted, poetic emanations, stripped of the charms of creative fancy, turned aside to the barren realities of science and of description. A certain oratorical polish of style could not compensate for the diminished susceptibility for nature and an idealizing inspiration. As a production of this unfruitful age, in which the poetic element only appeared as an incidental external adornment of thought, we may instance a poem on the Moselle by Ausonius. As a native of Aquitanian Gaul, the poet had accompanied Valentinian in his campaign against the Allemanni. The *Mosella*, which was composed in ancient Treves,* describes in some parts, and not ungracefully, the already vine-clad hills of one of the loveliest of our rivers, but the barren topography of the country, the enumeration of the streams falling into the Moselle, and the characteristic form, color, and habits of some of the different species of fish that are found in these waters, constitute the main features of this wholly didactic composition.

In the works of the Roman prose writers, among which we have already cited some remarkable passages by Cicero, descriptions of natural scenery are as rare as in those of Greek authors. It is only in the writings of the great historians, Julius Cæsar, Livy, and Tacitus, that we meet with some examples of the contrary, where they are compelled to de-

Wernsdorf to Cornelius Severus. The passages especially worthy of attention are the praises of general knowledge considered as "the fruits of the mind," v. 270-280; the lava currents, v. 360-370 and 474-515; the eruptions of water at the foot of the volcano (?), v. 395; the formation of pumice, v. 425 (p. xvi.-xx., 32, 42, 46, 50, 55, ed. Jacob, 1826).

* *Decii Magni Ausonii Mosella*, v. 189-199, p. 15, 44, Böcking. See, also, the notice of the fish of the Moselle, which is not unimportant with reference to natural history, and has been ingeniously applied by Valenciennes, v. 85-150, p. 9-12, and contrast it with Oppian (Bernhardy, *Griech. Litt.*, th. ii., s. 1049). The *Orthinogonia* and *Theriaca* of Æmilius Macer of Verona (imitations of the works of Nicander of Colophon), which have not come to us, belonged to the same dry, didactic style of poetry which treated of the products of nature. A natural description of the southern coast of Gaul, which is to be found in a poetical narrative of a journey by Claudius Rutilius Numatianus, a statesman under Honorius, is more attractive than the *Mosella* of Ausonius. Rutilius, who was driven from Rome by the irruption of the Gauls, is returning to his estates in Gaul. We unfortunately possess only a fragment of the second book of this poem, and this does not take us beyond the quarries of Carrara. See *Rutilii Claudii Numatiani de Reditu suo (e Roma in Galliam Narbonensem) libri duo*, rec. A. W. Zumpt, 1840, p. xv., 31-219 (with a fine map by Kiepert). Wernsdorf, *Poetæ Lat Min.*, t. v., pt. i., p. 125.