

the views of men in their communion with nature. The eye no longer rested on the forms of Olympic gods. The fathers of the Church, in their rhetorically correct and often poetical-ly imaginative language, now taught that the Creator showed himself great in inanimate no less than in animate nature, and in the wild strife of the elements no less than in the still activity of organic development. At the gradual dissolution of the Roman dominion, creative imagination, simplicity, and purity of diction disappeared from the writings of that dreary age, first in the Latin territories, and then in Grecian Asia Minor. A taste for solitude, for mournful contemplation, and for a moody absorption of mind, may be traced simultaneously in the style and coloring of the language. Whenever a new element seems to develop itself in the feelings of mankind, it may almost invariably be traced to an earlier, deep-seated individual germ. Thus the softness of Mimnermus\* has often been regarded as the expression of a general sentimental direction of the mind. The ancient world is not abruptly separated from the modern, but modifications in the religious sentiments and the tenderest social feelings of men, and changes in the special habits of those who exercise an influence on the ideas of the mass, must give a sudden predominance to that which might previously have escaped attention. It was the tendency of the Christian mind to prove from the order of the universe and the beauty of nature the greatness and goodness of the Creator. This tendency to glorify the Deity in his works gave rise to a taste for natural description. The earliest and most remarkable instances of this kind are to be met with in the writings of Minucius Felix, a rhetorician and lawyer at Rome, who lived in the beginning of the third century, and was the cotemporary of Tertullian and Philostratus. We follow with pleasure the delineation of his twilight rambles on the shore near Ostia, which he describes as more picturesque and more conducive to health than we find it in the present day. In the religious discourse entitled *Octavius*, we meet with a spirited defense of the new faith against the attacks of a heathen friend.†

The present would appear to be a fitting place to introduce some fragmentary examples of the descriptions of nature which occur in the writings of the Greek fathers, and which are

\* On elegiac poetry, consult Nicol. Bach, in the *Allg. Schul-Zeitung*, 1829, abth. ii., No. 134, s. 1097.

† *Minucii Felicis Octavius*, ex. rec. *Gron. Roterod.*, 1743, cap. 2, 3, p. 12, 28; cap. 16-18, p. 151-171.