

probably less well known to my readers than the evidences afforded by Roman authors, of the love of nature entertained by the ancient Italians. I will begin with a letter of Basil the Great, for which I have long cherished a special predilection. Basil, who was born at Cesarea in Cappadocia, renounced the pleasures of Athens when not more than thirty years old, and, after visiting the Christian hermitages in Cælo-Syria and Upper Egypt, retired, like the Essenes and Therapeuti before the Christian era, to a desert on the shores of the Armenian river Iris. There his second brother* Naucratius was drowned while fishing, after having led for five years the rigid life of an anchorite. He thus writes to Gregory of Nazianzum, "I believe I may at last flatter myself with having found the end of my wanderings. The hopes of being united with thee—or I should rather say my pleasant dreams, for hopes have been justly termed the waking dreams of men—have remained unfulfilled. God has suffered me to find a place, such as has often flitted before our imaginations; for that which fancy has shown us from afar is now made manifest to me. A high mountain, clothed with thick woods, is watered to the north by fresh and ever-flowing streams. At its foot lies an extended plain, rendered fruitful by the vapors with which it is moistened. The surrounding forest, crowded with trees of different kinds, incloses me as in a strong fortress. This wilderness is bounded by two deep ravines; on the one side, the river, rushing in foam down the mountain, forms an almost impassable barrier, while on the other all access is impeded by a broad mountain ridge. My hut is so situated on the summit of the mountain that I can overlook the whole plain, and follow throughout its course the Iris, which is more beautiful, and has a more abundant body of water, than the Strymon near Amphipolis. The river of my wilderness, which is more impetuous than any other that I know of, breaks against the jutting rock, and throws itself foaming into the abyss below: an object of admiration to the mountain wanderer, and a source of profit to the natives, from the numerous fishes that are found in its waters. Shall

* On the death of Naucratius, about the year 357, see *Basilii Magni, Op. omnia*, ed. Par., 1730, t. iii., p. xlv. The Jewish Essenes, two centuries before our era, led an anchorite life on the western shores of the Dead Sea, *in communion with nature*. Pliny, in speaking of them, uses the graceful expression (v. 15), "*mira gens, socia palmarum.*" The Therapeuti lived originally in monastic communities, in a charming district near Lake Mœris (Neander, *Allg. Geschichte der Christl. Religion und Kirche*, bd. i., abth. i., 1842, s. 73, 103).