

what a degree of perfection the monks of Ireland had brought the art of copying and ornamentation in those days. The extant manuscripts of Luxeuil and Bobbio show that Columbanus and his Irish monks knew how to impart their knowledge to their disciples.

The physical or manual labour consisted principally in the clearing and cultivation of the land. The monks ploughed the fields, sowed, reaped and threshed the corn. Columbanus' rule had no exceptions; manual labour was obligatory on all; only in time of serious illness was the monk allowed to be absent from the threshing barn. One of the articles in his rule obliged them to work in such a manner during the day that they should fall asleep "while going to bed", and they had often to rise before having had sufficient repose for the body.

Fifteen or twenty years were passed in this holy work of their own sanctification and that of their neighbour. But after that period came a time of persecution. Gontran was dead. The young king Thierry II, encouraged by the wicked ambition of Queen Bruenhaut, was leading a most licentious life. The queen became the deadly enemy of Columbanus, on account of the admonitions which he addressed to the young king, and especially because of the saint's refusal on one occasion to bless the illegitimate sons of Thierry whom Bruenhaut had presented to him. Another grievance of the queen was that our Saint, according to the monastic rule established in Ireland, had forbidden any women, even the queen herself, to enter the monastery. Columbanus was ordered to return to Ireland and upon his refusal soldiers were sent with instructions to use violence towards the monks, if Columbanus persisted in his resolution. Wishing to protect his disciples the Saint left the monastery which he has founded, where he had lived for nigh 20 years and which he was never again to see. All his disciples wished to follow him, but a royal order allowed this privilege

to none but those of Irish origin. Bruenhaut was very anxious to get rid of those fearless Irishmen, but she was in no hurry to destroy the monastery of which Burgundy was already proud.

Columbanus with his companions passed by Besançon and Autun to Nevers, where he embarked upon the Loire for Nantes, in which place a ship was prepared to convey him to Ireland. It was not the will of God that Columbanus should return to his native country. The vessel upon which his companions had already embarked was cast high and dry on the beach. Seeing this, the terrified captain refused to have anything further to do with them, and the shipwrecked monks were left free to go where they pleased, except to return to Burgundy.

Columbanus now directed his steps towards Neustria where he was well received by king Clotaire II. Ever true to his apostolic vocation, the Irish missionary did not hesitate to charge the King with all the disorders that reigned at his court. From this place he proceeded to the palace of Theodebert, king of Austrasia, who invited him to preach to the pagan nations along the Rhine and which were then under Theodebert's sway.

Columbanus readily accepted the offer and "embarking on the Rhine at a point below Mayence" says Alzog, "he ascended that river until he reached Zurich, made a short stay at Threagan and Arbon and finally established himself at Bregentz on the Lake of Constance." He and his companions reaped an abundant harvest of souls on the shores of this beautiful Swiss lake. "His chief assistant in those missionary labours" continues the same historian "was another Irishman by the name of Gall, as daring and as resolute as Columbanus himself: well educated and eloquent and able to preach in the German as well as in the Latin language."

Upon the defeat and death of Theodebert, Columbanus resolved to