

which I shall show thee," he left his dear solitude of Bangor and accompanied by 12 others, crossed Great Britain and entered Gaul. He was now in a country in which the Gospel had already been preached, but on account of the ceaseless wars and the consequent decline of ecclesiastical authority, parts of the country were rapidly relapsing into a state of barbarism. Here was a vast field of labour for our saint and his disciples. For several years he wandered throughout the country, preaching the gospel and giving a striking example of the doctrine he taught by the humility and charity of his life. During these wanderings he was received by Gontran, King of Burgundy, who, captivated by the saint's eloquence, made most tempting offers in order to induce the Irish Apostle to remain. Columbanus refused the riches, but accepted the old fortress of Annegray in which to found a monastery and carry on systematically the conversion of the Kingdom. There he led a life which makes our immortified souls shudder. When not engaged in preaching or teaching the people; he often quitted his disciples, and penetrating deep into the forest, passed entire weeks there, having no other food than the roots and wild berries of the woods. At the end of a few years spent in evangelizing the people and in his own sanctification, the ever increasing number of his disciples determined him to found another monastery. From the same Gontran he obtained the old stronghold of Luxeuil. In "Ages of Faith" its foundation is ascribed to the year 590 and it is placed in the Vosgean Mountains. "Luxeuil was in Franche Comté in the diocese of Besançon, at the foot of the Vosges, towards Lorraine." The country for miles around, consisting of mountains and inaccessible defiles, was covered with immense forests of pine trees. This was the spot which Columbanus and his disciples were soon to change into fields of pastures and waving corn, and the old fortress was

destined to become the central house from which branch-houses were rapidly established throughout the surrounding provinces. Disciples thronged around the Irish apostle, so that in a very short time, more than 500 followers of our saint were counted in the three monasteries of Annegray, Luxeuil and Fontaines.

What a heavenly life that Irish monk and his disciples led! The Rule was practically the same as that in vigour in Ireland at the time. Obedience was rightly regarded as the foundation of the monastic and apostolic life. Upon this basis was to be erected the whole spiritual edifice consisting in love of God and charity towards their fellow men. The monks' days were divided between manual labour and prayer; following to the letter the maxim of St. Jerome "Semper te diabolus inveniat occupatum" not a moment was spent idly. Their only meal was taken about sunset, and the rule *obliged* them to eat every day in order to have the necessary strength to work. The divine offices were of a length which in our times would seem insupportable. Their shortest Matins consisted of 24 psalms, the longest of 75, and the average of 36. The long office was recited throughout the winter, and every week during spring three psalms were omitted until the Matins were reduced to 36. Besides these, during the day which was given up to teaching, preaching and manual labour, three psalms were recited every hour. Silence had to be strictly observed during their work, whether intellectual or physical. Holy Scripture and the Fathers formed, says the Benedictine Mabillon, the only theology of that time; hence Greek and Hebrew, the languages of the scriptures, were deeply studied. In addition the logic of Aristotle, the geometry and physics of that time, mathematics, music and poetry entered into the curriculum of those lazy monks. Time was also devoted to the copying of old manuscripts. Everybody knows to