

flammation caused by eating bread made from rye infected with the ergot fungus. This monastery complex included a hospital where the brothers treated their patients with a preparation of pigs' fat. (The symbol of their patron, the hermit St Anthony of Egypt, was the pig; he is usually depicted with a porcine companion). Further away from the city were the Cistercian monastery of Staffarda, founded in 1135 by Marquis Manfred of Saluzzo, and the Augustinian abbey of Vezzolano, which claimed to have been founded by Charlemagne, but whose actual establishment probably dates from the end of the eleventh century.

Besides dedicating themselves to a life of prayer and meditation, and ministering to the flow of pilgrims, the monks were also instrumental in developing the agricultural land deeded to them by their benefactors. The monastic houses were among the most innovative landowners, whose extensive estates served as models for other proprietors. The Cistercians, who had founded another house at Rivalta southwest of Turin, were particularly important as agricultural pioneers. They deliberately chose remote rural sites for their monasteries, far from the temptations of urban life. There, in obedience to their rule, they labored at clearing forests and scrublands, and making the waste land productive. They and the other new monastic communities that sprang up at this time thus helped to spearhead the region's economic development, besides enriching its cultural and spiritual life.

4. *Turin and Frederick Barbarossa.*

In 1155 Frederick I of Hohenstaufen, known as Barbarossa, was elected emperor and traveled from Germany to be crowned in Rome. In 1158 he convoked an assembly of his vassals at Roncaglia, near Piacenza, where he unveiled an ambitious program to reverse the decline of imperial power in the Kingdom of Italy. He proclaimed his intention to reimpose direct imperial rule, appointing his own officials to govern the cities, and levying taxes that had fallen into abeyance. Over the next two decades Barbarossa would conduct six campaigns in his Italian kingdom, endeavoring to implement this program and turn the shadowy sovereignty of the emperors into a concrete political reality. But in the end his grand design would fail, because he was forced to fight too many enemies on too many fronts: constant rebellions by the great lords in Germany distracted him, while in Italy he had to contend with the stubborn opposition of the papacy, and the determined resistance of many of the north Italian cities, led by Milan. These cities had enjoyed *de facto*