

A MONK OF THE AVENTINE

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A Monk of the Aventine by Ernst Eckstein & Helen Hunt Johnson

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ERNST ECKSTEIN & HELEN HUNT JOHNSON

**A MONK OF
THE AVENTINE**

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BY
ERNST ECKSTEIN

Translated from the German
BY
HELEN HUNT JOHNSON



BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1894

INTRODUCTION.

I BERNARDUS, monk in the monastery of Saint Stephan, on Mount Aventine in Rome, write this on Palm Sunday in my cell, which, shall not our Sir Prior be moved to mercy, must become my grave. For five years I have been imprisoned here, and the unspeakable torture of the imprisonment will last through eleven more years. I pine in absolute solitude, broken but twice a week when Brother Hieronymus, to whose care I have been entrusted, takes me for a little hour out into the cloister-garden, where I see God's clear-shining sun, and the mighty pines which ever murmur their mournful and yearning song.

I write this as a preface to the pages which shall follow, which I have written slowly and discreetly, — progressing often

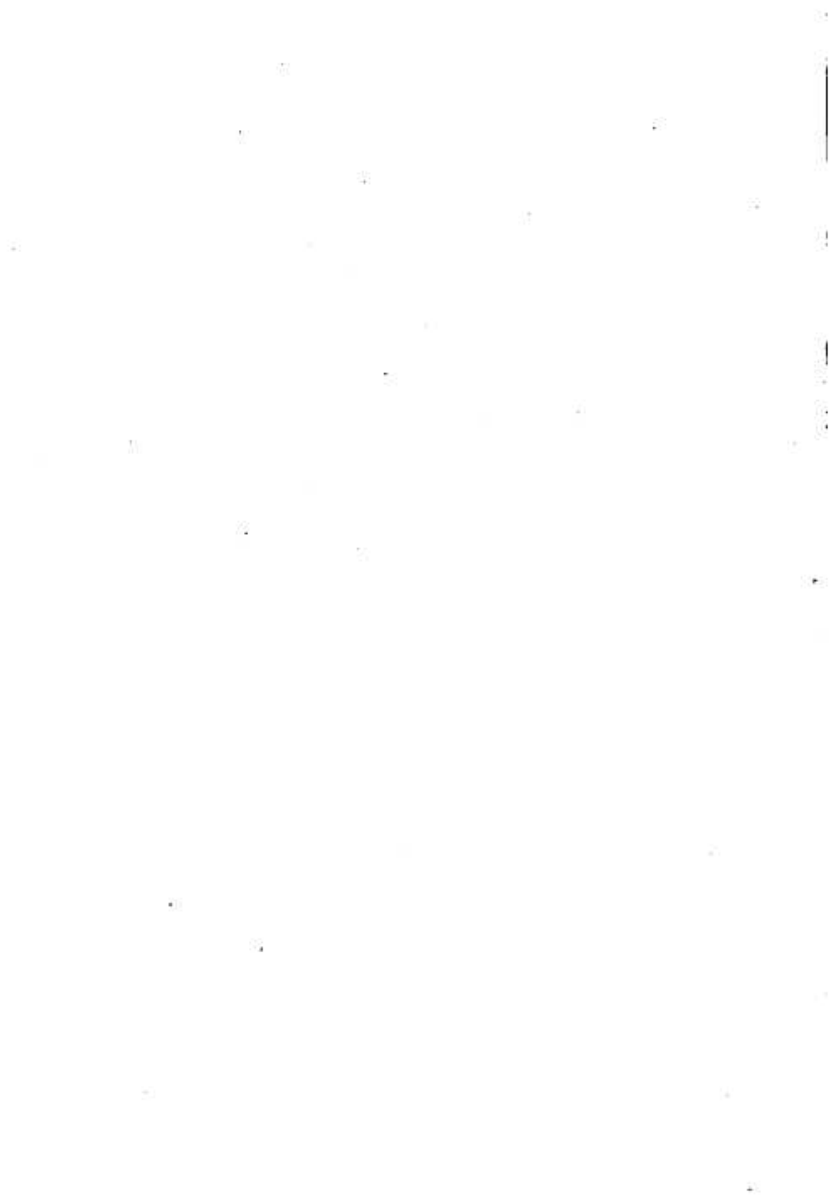
Tulla a June 1792

but a few pages at a time, — during the past year, since, through the intercession of Colestinus, I received pen and ink, and was appointed by the prior to copy the *Biblia Sacra* in beautiful letters upon costly parchment. This exemplar, which the worthy Colestinus is ornamenting with colored initials, is to be the gift of our monastery to the Holy Father, and will be presented with much ceremony on the sixtieth anniversary of his birth. I failed upon one of these pages; this, therefore, I put away and kept. The finished pieces I gave to Brother Hieronymus, when in the morning he set the jug and the barley-bread before me on the table. The remaining pages I turned over, as they were for the most part somewhat written upon, using the other side for these records which were finished yesterday.

All which is told here is true and without embellishment. I have made myself and my course of action neither better nor worse than they are in the sight of God,

the All-Seeing, who searcheth the heart and the secret chambers thereof. I have feigned no repentance where I have felt none, but have communicated frankly and simply, and without palliation, what memory dictated.

Who shall read these pages I know not. I have laid them in the old hiding-place where I stowed the witnesses of my so-called misdeed, when first I entered the path which led me into misery. Perhaps among my readers there will be a priest of the forgiving spirit of Ludovicus, whom, despite all which I have suffered and still suffer on his account, I yet prize as my benefactor, and as the only person who has truly loved me upon earth, with the exception of my parents,—and another Being. The peace of God and the mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be with the soul of the departed. Through steadfastness in death he expiated what sins in life he may have committed.



A MONK OF THE AVENTINE.

IN Albano, some miles south of the Eternal City, I was born on the first of March, in the nine hundred and seventy-first year of Redemption. In holy baptism I received the name Jusephus Camillus, and was commonly called Juseppe according to the Alban dialect. Bernardus or Bernhardus, with the epithet, "the younger," is my monastery name, which I received at the time of my consecration.

My father, Andrea Pescaro, was a tinker and tin-founder. He died three years after my birth, killed by robbers, because he would go to Rome at Eastertide. My pious and true mother, Jacoba, — according to the speech of the people, Jacoma, — daughter of