

THE LIFE OF CHARLEMAGNE

By Einhard. Translated by Samuel Epes Turner

EINHARD'S PREFACE

Since I have taken upon myself to narrate the public and private life, and no small part of the deeds, of my lord and foster-father, the most lent and most justly renowned King Charles, I have condensed the matter into as brief a form as possible. I have been careful not to omit any facts that could come to my knowledge, but at the same time not to offend by a prolix style those minds that despise everything modern, if one can possibly avoid offending by a new work men who seem to despise also the masterpieces of antiquity, the works of most learned and luminous writers. Very many of them, I have no doubt, are men devoted to a life of literary leisure, who feel that the affairs of the present generation ought not to be passed by, and who do not consider everything done today as unworthy of mention and deserving to be given over to silence and oblivion, but are nevertheless seduced by lust of immortality to celebrate the glorious deeds of other times by some sort of composition rather than to deprive posterity of the mention of their own names by not writing at all.

Be this as it may, I see no reason why I should refrain from entering upon a task of this kind, since no man can write with more accuracy than I of events that took place about me, and of facts concerning which I had personal knowledge, ocular demonstration as the saying goes, and I have no means of ascertaining whether or not any one else has the subject in hand.

In any event, I would rather commit my story to writing, and hand it down to posterity in partnership with others, so to speak, than to suffer the most glorious life of this most excellent king, the greatest of all the princes of his day, and his illustrious deeds, hard for men of later times to imitate, to be wrapped in the darkness of oblivion.

But there are still other reasons, neither unwarrantable nor insufficient, in my opinion, that urge me to write on this subject, namely, the care that King Charles bestowed upon me in my childhood, and my constant friendship with himself and his children after I took up my abode at court. In this way he strongly endeared me to himself, and made me greatly his debtor as well in death as in life, so that were I unmindful of the benefits conferred upon me, to keep silence concerning the most glorious and illustrious deeds of a man who claims so much at my hands, and suffer his life to lack due eulogy and written memorial, as if he had never lived, I should deservedly appear ungrateful, and be so considered, albeit my powers are feeble, scanty, next to nothing indeed, and not at all adapted to write and set forth a life that would tax the eloquence of a Tully [note: Tully is Marcus Tullius Cicero].

I submit the book. It contains the history of a very great and distinguished man; but there is nothing in it to wonder at besides his deeds, except the fact that I, who am a barbarian, and very little versed in the Roman language, seem to suppose myself capable of writing gracefully and respectably in Latin, and to carry my presumption so far as to disdain the sentiment that Cicero is said in the first book of the Tusculan Disputations to have expressed when speaking of the Latin authors. His words are: "It is an outrageous abuse both of time and literature for a man to commit his thoughts to writing without having the ability either to arrange them or elucidate them, or attract readers by some charm of style." This dictum of the famous orator might have deterred me from writing if I had not made up my mind that it was better to risk the opinions of the world, and put my little talents for composition to the test, than to slight the memory of so great a man for the sake of sparing myself.

A vivid life of Charlemagne, written ca A.D. 830 by a member of his court. Foreword Einhard's Preface The Life of the Emperor Charles Notes Genealogical Table Map. Get A Copy. Amazon. Einhard gives a notable account of Charlemagne's life, through his eyes. To me, it's awesome to see that Einhard went against the grain (back then, literature wasn't really of much importance or value) and wrote a biography. It's I was supposed to read this for school, but history is not my forte, and I only managed to get halfway through. Luckily, I was able to finish the assignment with the first half of the book (and Sparknotes :P). For history lovers, this would be an unforgettable read. Einhard gives a notable account of Charlemagne's life, through his eyes. Charlemagne or Charles the Great (2 April 748 – 28 January 814), numbered Charles I, was the King of the Franks from 768, the King of the Lombards from 774, and the Emperor of the Romans from 800. During the Early Middle Ages, he united the majority of western and central Europe. He was the first recognised emperor to rule from western Europe since the fall of the Western Roman Empire around three centuries earlier. The expanded Frankish state that Charlemagne founded is called the Carolingian Empire Vita Karoli Magni (Life of Charles the Great) is a biography of Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor, written by Einhard. Literary context. Historians have traditionally described the work as the first example of a biography of a European king. The author endeavored to imitate the style of that of the ancient Roman biographer Suetonius, most famous for his work the Twelve Caesars. Einhard's biography is especially modeled after the biography of Emperor Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire. Date. The date of the work is uncertain and a number of theories have b In his personal life, Charlemagne had multiple wives and mistresses and perhaps as many as 18 children. He was reportedly a devoted father, who encouraged his children's education. He allegedly loved his daughters so much that he prohibited them from marrying while he was alive. Einhard (c. 775-840), a Frankish scholar and contemporary of Charlemagne, wrote a biography of the emperor after his death. In the work, titled "Vita Karoli Magni (Life of Charles the Great)," he described Charlemagne as "broad and strong in the form of his body and exceptionally tall without, however, exceeding an app Librivox recording of The Life of Charlemagne by Einhard [Translated by Samuel Epes Turner]. Read by LibriVox Volunteers. Einhard was employed by Charlemagne as a court historian. At the request of Charlemagne's son and successor Louis the Pious, he wrote a biography of Charlemagne, the Vita Karoli Magni or Life of Charlemagne (c. 817–830), which provides much direct information about Charlemagne's life and character. In composing this he made full use of the Frankish Royal annals. Einhard's literary model was the classical work of the Roman historian Suetonius, the Lives of the