LEGENDS OF CHARLEMAGNE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649223589

Legends of Charlemagne by Thomas Bulfinch

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THOMAS BULFINCH

LEGENDS OF CHARLEMAGNE

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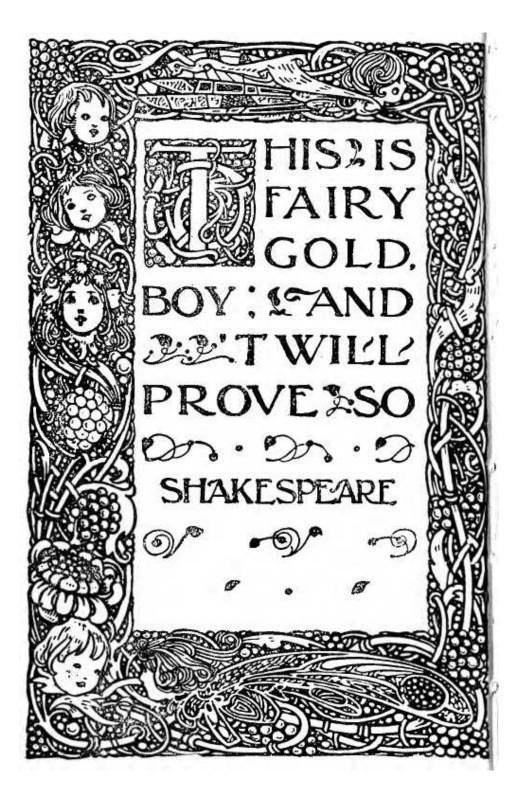
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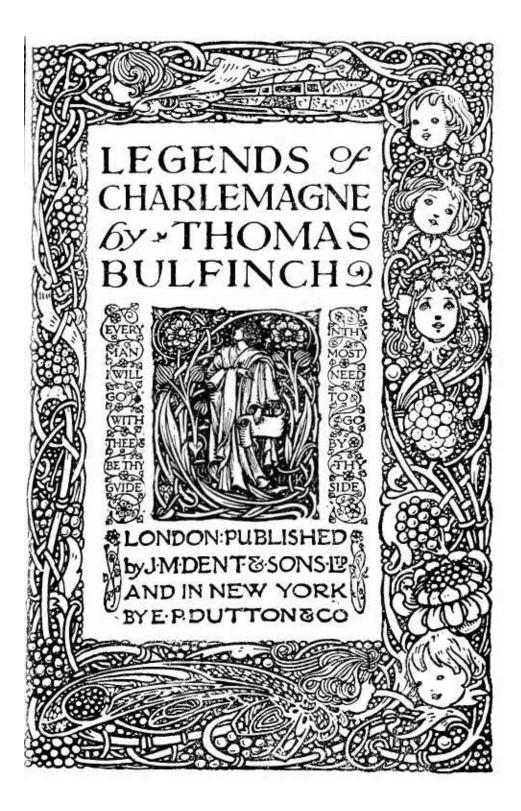
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INTRODUCTION

ONE of Thomas Bulfinch's books, in which he sought to clear a way into the great and entrancing jungle of the earlier ages, has already appeared in this series.1 He had a distinct feeling for the needs of Everyman and of those who like himself had to give most of their days to commerce, for he sat at the desk of the accountant and the bank-clerk through all his long life. He was born at Boston in 1796, went to school there and to Harvard University, lived on through the days when Emerson, Hawthorne, and Longfellow were coming and going in that city, spent the last thirty years of his life as a clerk in the Boston Merchants' Bank, and died in 1867. The American Civil War befell during his last decade, and he saw many changes; but his chief events were books, and the exploits of Charlemagne engaged him at the very time when North and South were at their mortal struggle. It is no easy thing to condense a whole confused literature into a single volume, as he did in the case of the romances and histories of Charlemagne; and when he did it, he had not at command as we have now the eleven or twelve volumes of the English Charlemagne Romances published by the Early English Text Society. His book is on the face of it a kind of primer, meant to induct its readers into the region of Orlando, Rinaldo, Astolfo, the brave revolter Ogier the Dane, and Malagigi the Enchanter. Presently it is hoped to add to Everyman's Library one or more of the actual romances; and meanwhile this book will serve to arouse an interest in the world whose " threshold was lit with the morning sun."

Caxton's words in his prologue of 1485 to the first volume of Charlemagne to be printed in English—the Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prynce, Charles the

1 No. 472, The Age of Fable.

Grete (a translation of the French romance of Fierebras)—apply very nearly to the other task of reducing and translating that Thomas Bulfinch attempted more than three centuries and a half later-

"Somme persones of noble estate and degree haue desyred me to reduce thystorye and lyf of the noble and crysten prynce Charles the grete kyng of fraunce and emperour of Rome the second of the thre worthy to thende that thystoryes actes and lyues may be had in our maternal tongue lyke as they be in latyn or in frensshe For the moost quantyte of the people vnderstonde not latyn ne frensshe here in this noble royame of englond And for to satysfye the desyre & requeste of my good synguler lordes & specyal maysters and frendes I haue enprysed and concluded in myself to reduce this savd book in to our englysche as all alonge and playnely ye may rede here and see in thys book here folowyng besechyng al them that shal fynde faute in the same to correcte and amende it And also to pardone me of the rude & symple reducyng and though so be there be no gave termes ne subtyl ne newe eloquence vet I hope that it shal be vnderstonden & to that entente I haue specyally reduced it after the symple connyng that god hath lente to mc, whercof I humbly & wyth al my herte thanke hym." E. R.

The "Early English Text Society's" Charlemagne Romances:-

Sir Ferumbras (1879), ed. S. J. Herrtage,
The Sege of Melayne (1879-80).

III. The Romance of Duke Rowland and Sir Otuel of Spayne (1880), ed. S. J. Herrtage. IV. The Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prince Charles the Grete

(1881), ed. S. J. Herrtage. V. The Sowdone of Babylone (1881), ed. Hauskneet.

VI. The Taill of Rauf Coilyear (1882), ed. S. J. Herrtage. VII. Duke Huon of Burdeaux (1883-7), ed. S. L. Lee. VIII. The Four Sons of Aymon (1885), ed. Octavia Richardson.

The following is the list of Thomas Bulfinch's works :---

Hebrew Lyrical History, 1853; The Age of Fable, 1855; The Age of Chivalry, 1858, 1905; The Boy Inventor, 1860; Legends of Charlemagne, or Romance of the Middle Ages, 1863; Poetry of the Age of Fable, 1863; Oregon and Eldorado, or Romance of the Rivers, 1866.