

LEGENDS OF CHARLEMAGNE

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Legends of Charlemagne by Thomas Bulfinch

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THOMAS BULFINCH

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CHARLEMAGNE**

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BY THOMAS BULFINCH
AUTHOR OF "THE AGE OF FABLE"

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LEGENDS OF
CHARLEMAGNE
by THOMAS
BULFINCH

EVERY
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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*.

