

# Charlemagne

Account by Einhard from *The Life of Charlemagne* translated by S.E. Turner (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880)

This is part of the same account of Charlemagne's life found in the last excerpt you were given.

*Charles had the gift of ready and fluent speech, and could express whatever he had to say with the utmost clearness. He was not satisfied with command of his native language merely, but gave attention to the study of foreign ones, and in particular was such a master of Latin that he could speak it as well as his native tongue; but he could understand Greek better than he could speak it. He was so eloquent, indeed, that he might have passed for a teacher of eloquence. He most zealously cultivated the liberal arts, held those who taught them in great esteem, and conferred great honours upon them. He took lessons in grammar of the deacon Peter of Pisa, as that time an aged man. Another deacon, Albin of Britain, surnamed Alcuin, a man of Saxon extraction, who was the greatest scholar of the day, was his teacher in other branches of learning. The King spent much time and labour with him studying rhetoric, dialectics, and especially astronomy; he learned to reckon and used to investigate the motions of the heavenly bodies most curiously, with an intelligent scrutiny. He also tried to write and used to keep tablets and blanks in bed under his pillow, that at leisure hours he might accustom his hand to form the letters; however, as he did not begin his efforts in due season, but late in life, they met with ill success.*

1. What evidence is there that Charlemagne valued education?
2. Einhard claims Charlemagne was well educated. What does he base this claim on? Is there any reason to doubt it? Explain.

*The plan that he adopted for his children's education was, first of all, to have both boys and girls instructed in the liberal arts, to which he also turned his own attention. As soon as their years admitted, in accordance with the custom of the Franks, the boys had to learn horsemanship, and to practice war and the chase, and the girls to familiarize themselves with cloth-making, and to handle distaff and spindle, that they might not grow indolent through idleness, and he fostered in them every virtuous sentiment. He lost only three of all of his children before his death, two sons and one daughter, Charles, who was the eldest, Pepin, whom he had made King of Italy, and Hroudrud, his oldest daughter...*

*He was so careful of the training of his sons and daughters that he never took his meals without them when he was at home, and never made a journey without them; his sons would ride at his side and his daughters follow him, while a number of his body-guard, detailed for their protection, brought up the rear. Strange to say, although they were very handsome women, and he loved them very dearly, he was never willing to marry any of them to man of their own nation, or to a foreigner, but kept them all at home until his death, saying that he could not dispense with their society. Hence, though otherwise happy, he experienced the malignity of fortune as far as they were concerned, yet he concealed his knowledge of the rumours current in regard to them and of the suspicions entertained of their honour.*

1. What kind of education did Charlemagne's children receive?
2. Einhard says that Charlemagne "only lost three of his children before his death". What does this tell us about the dangers of life in the 9<sup>th</sup> century?
3. Why do you think Charlemagne did not allow any of his daughters to marry? What does Einhard claim is the reason? Does this sound believable?