Einhard is known as a historian. He was born c. 770 in the eastern part of the Frankish Empire. His earliest training he received at the monastery of Fulda, where he showed such unusual mental powers that Abbot Baugulf sent him to the court of Charlemagne. His education was completed at the Palace School, where he excelled in mathematics and architecture. He became one of Charlemagne’s most trusted advisers. Charlemagne gave Einhard charge of his great public buildings, e. g. the construction of Aachen cathedral and the palaces of Aachen and Ingelheim, and also sent him on various diplomatic missions. His best known writing is the *Vita Caroli Magni* (the Life of Charles the Great), wherein he provides a uniquely personal view of his friend and king. Below are selections from this work.

**Private Life**

Thus did Charles defend and increase as well, as beautify his, kingdom, as is well known; and here let me express my admiration of his great qualities and his extraordinary constancy alike in good and evil fortune. I will now forthwith proceed to give the details of his private and family life.

After his father's death, while sharing the kingdom with his brother, he bore his unfriendliness and jealousy most patiently, and, to the wonder of all, could not be provoked to be angry with him. Later he married a daughter of of Desiderius, King of the Lombards, at the instance of his mother; but he repudiated her at the end of a year for some reason unknown, and married Hildegard, a woman of high birth, of Suabian origin. He had three sons by her - Charles, Pepin and Louis -and as many daughters - Hruodrud, Bertha, and and Gisela. He had three other daughters besides these- Theoderada, Hiltrud, and Ruodhaid - two by his third wife, Fastrada, a woman of East Frankish (that is to say, of German) origin, and the third by a concubine, whose name for the moment escapes me. At the death of Fastrada [794], he married Liutgard, an Alemannic woman, who bore him no children. After her death [Jun4 4, 800] he had three concubines - Gersuinda, a Saxon by whom he had Adaltrud; Regina, who was the mother of Drogo and Hugh; and Ethelind, by whom he lead Theodoric. Charles' mother, Bertherada, passed her old age with him in great honor; he entertained the greatest veneration for her; and there was never any disagreement between them except when he divorced the daughter of King Desiderius, whom he had married to please her. She died soon after Hildegarde, after living to three grandsons and as many granddaughters in her son's house, and he buried her with great pomp in the Basilica of St. Denis, where his father lay. He had an only sister, Gisela, who had consecrated herself to a religious life from girlhood, and he cherished as much affection for her as for his mother. She also died a few years before him in the nunnery where she passed her life.

**Charles and the Education of His Children**

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 only lost three of all his children before his death, two sons and one daughter, Charles, who was the eldest, Pepin, whom he had
made King of Italy, and Hruodrud, his oldest daughter, whom he had betrothed to Constantine [VI, 780-802], Emperor of the Greeks. Pepin left one son, named Bernard, and five daughters, Adelaide, Atula, Guntrada, Berthaid and Theoderada. The King gave a striking proof of his fatherly affection at the time of Pepin's death [810]: he appointed the grandson to succeed Pepin, and had the granddaughters brought up with his own daughters. When his sons and his daughter died, he was not so calm as might have been expected from his remarkably strong mind, for his affections were no less strong, and moved him to tears. Again, when he was told of the death of Hadrian [796], the Roman Pontiff, whom he had loved most of all his friends, he wept as much as if he had lost a brother, or a very dear son. He was by nature most ready to contract friendships, and not only made friends easily, but clung to them persistently, and cherished most fondly those with whom he had formed such ties. 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 bodyguard, 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 a 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 other-wise happy, he experienced the malignity of fortune as far as they were concerned; yet he concealed his knowledge of the rumors current in regard to them, and of the suspicions entertained of their honor.

Conspiracies Against Charlemagne

By one of his concubines he had a son, handsome in face, but hunchbacked, named Pepin, whom I omitted to mention in the list of his children. When Charles was at war with the Huns, and was wintering in Bavaria [792], this Pepin shammed sickness, and plotted against his father in company with some of the leading Franks, who seduced him with vain promises of the royal authority. When his deceit was discovered, and the conspirators were punished, his head was shaved, and he was suffered, in accordance with his wishes, to devote himself to a religious life in the monastery of Prüm. A formidable conspiracy against Charles had previously been set on foot in Germany, but all the traitors were banished, some of them without mutilation, others after their eyes had been put out. Three of them only lost their lives; they drew their swords and resisted arrest, and, after killing several men, were cut down, because they could not be otherwise overpowered. It is supposed that the cruelty of Queen Fastrada was the primary cause of these plots, and they were both due to Charles' apparent acquiescence in his wife's cruel conduct, and deviation from the usual kindness and gentleness of his disposition. All the rest of his life he was regarded by everyone with the utmost love and affection, so much so that not the least accusation of unjust rigor was ever made against him.

Charlemagne's Treatment of Foreigners

He liked foreigners, and was at great pains to take them under his protection. There were often so many of them, both in the palace and the kingdom, that they might reasonably have been considered a nuisance; but he, with his broad humanity, was very little disturbed by such annoyances, because he felt himself compensated for these great inconveniences by the praises of his generosity and the reward of high renown.

Personal Appearance

Charles was large and strong, and of lofty stature, though not disproportionately tall (his height is well known to have been seven times the length of his foot); the upper part of his head was round, his eyes very large and animated, nose a little long, hair fair, and face laughing and merry. Thus his appearance was always stately and dignified, whether he was standing or sitting; although his neck was thick and somewhat
short, and his belly rather prominent; but the symmetry of the rest of his body concealed these defects. His
gait was firm, his whole carriage manly, and his voice clear, but not so strong as his size led one to expect.
His health was excellent, except during the four years preceding his death, when he was subject to frequent
fevers; at the last he even limped a little with one foot. Even in those years he consulted rather his own
inclinations than the advice of physicians, who were almost hateful to him, because they wanted him to
give up roasts, to which he was accustomed, and to eat boiled meat instead. In accordance with the national
custom, he took frequent exercise on horseback and in the chase, accomplishments in which scarcely any
people in the world can equal the Franks. He enjoyed the exhalations from natural warm springs, and often
practiced swimming, in which he was such an adept that none could surpass him; and hence it was that he
built his palace at Aix la-Chapelle, and lived there constantly during his latter years until his death. He used
not only to invite his sons to his bath, but his nobles and friends, and now and then a troop of his retinue or
body guard, so that a hundred or more persons sometimes bathed with him.

Dress

He used to wear the national, that is to say, the Frank, dress-next his skin a linen shirt and linen breeches,
and above these a tunic fringed with silk; while hose fastened by bands covered his lower limbs, and shoes
his feet, and he protected his shoulders and chest in winter by a close-fitting coat of otter or marten skins.
Over all he flung a blue cloak, and he always had a sword girt about him, usually one with a gold or silver
hilt and belt; he sometimes carried a jeweled sword, but only on great feast-days or at the reception of
ambassadors from foreign nations. He despised foreign costumes, however handsome, and never allowed
himself to be robed in them, except twice in Rome, when he donned the Roman tunic, chlamys, and shoes;
the first time at the request of Pope Hadrian, the second to gratify Leo, Hadrian's successor. On great feast-
days he made use of embroidered clothes, and shoes bedecked with precious stones; his cloak was fastened
by a golden buckle, and he appeared crowned with a diadem of gold and gems: but on other days his dress
varied little from the common dress of the people.

Habits

Charles was temperate in eating, and particularly so in drinking, for he abominated drunkenness in
anybody, much more in himself and those of his household; but he could not easily abstain from food, and
often complained that fasts injured his health. He very rarely gave entertainments, only on great feast-days,
and then to large numbers of people. His meals ordinarily consisted of four courses, not counting the roast,
which his huntsmen used to bring in on the spit; he was more fond of this than of any other dish. While at
table, he listened to reading or music. The subjects of the readings were the stories and deeds of olden time:
he was fond, too, of St. Augustine's books, and especially of the one entitled "The City of God."

He was so moderate in the use of wine and all sorts of drink that he rarely allowed himself more than three
cups in the course of a meal. In summer after the midday meal, he would eat some fruit, drain a single cup,
put off his clothes and shoes, just as he did for the night, and rest for two or three hours. He was in the habit
of awaking and rising from bed four or five times during the night. While he was dressing and putting on
his shoes, he not only gave audience to his friends, but if the Count of the Palace told him of any suit in
which his judgment was necessary, he had the parties brought before him forthwith, took cognizance of the
case, and gave his decision, just as if he were sitting on the Judgment-seat. This was not the only business
that he transacted at this time, but he performed any duty of the day whatever, whether he had to attend to
the matter himself, or to give commands concerning it to his officers.

Studies

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 honors upon them. He took lessons in grammar of the deacon Peter of Pisa, at 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.

Piety

He cherished with the greatest fervor and devotion the principles of the Christian religion, which had been instilled into him from infancy. Hence it was that he built the beautiful basilica at Aix-la-Chapelle, which he adorned with gold and silver and lamps, and with rails and doors of solid brass. He had the columns and marbles for this structure brought from Rome and Ravenna, for he could not find such as were suitable elsewhere. He was a constant worshipper at this church as long as his health permitted, going morning and evening, even after nightfall, besides attending mass; and he took care that all the services there conducted should be administered with the utmost possible propriety, very often warning the sextons not to let any improper or unclean thing be brought into the building or remain in it. He provided it with a great number of sacred vessels of gold and silver and with such a quantity of clerical robes that not even the doorkeepers who fill the humblest office in the church were obliged to wear their everyday clothes when in the exercise of their duties. He was at great pains to improve the church reading and psalmody, for he was well skilled in both although he neither read in public nor sang, except in a low tone and with others.

Generosity [Charles and the Roman Church]

He was very forward in succoring the poor, and in that gratuitous generosity which the Greeks call alms, so much so that he not only made a point of giving in his own country and his own kingdom, but when he discovered that there were Christians living in poverty in Syria, Egypt, and Africa, at Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Carthage, he had compassion on their wants, and used to send money over the seas to them. The reason that he zealously strove to make friends with the kings beyond seas was that he might get help and relief to the Christians living under their rule.

He cherished the Church of St. Peter the Apostle at Rome above all other holy and sacred places, and heaped its treasury with a vast wealth of gold, silver, and precious stones. He sent great and countless gifts to the popes; and throughout his whole reign the wish that he had nearest at heart was to re-establish the ancient authority of the city of Rome under his care and by his influence, and to defend and protect the Church of St. Peter, and to beautify and enrich it out of his own store above all other churches. Although he held it in such veneration, he only repaired to Rome to pay his vows and make his supplications four times during the whole forty-seven years that he reigned.

Charlemagne Crowned Emperor

When he made his last journey thither, he also had other ends in view. The Romans had inflicted many injuries upon the Pontiff Leo, tearing out his eyes and cutting out his tongue, so that he had been compelled to call upon the King for help [Nov 24, 800]. Charles accordingly went to Rome, to set in order the affairs of the Church, which were in great confusion, and passed the whole winter there. It was then that he received the titles of Emperor and Augustus [Dec 25, 800], to which he at first had such an aversion that he declared that he would not have set foot in the Church the day that they were conferred, although it was a great feast-day, if he could have foreseen the design of the Pope. He bore very patiently with the jealousy which the Roman emperors showed upon his assuming these titles, for they took this step very ill; and by dint of frequent embassies and letters, in which he addressed them as brothers, he made their haughtiness yield to his magnanimity, a quality in which he was unquestionably much their superior.
Reforms

It was after he had received the imperial name that, finding the laws of his people very defective (the Franks have two sets of laws, very different in many particulars), he determined to add what was wanting, to reconcile the discrepancies, and to correct what was vicious and wrongly cited in them. However, he went no further in this matter than to supplement the laws by a few capitularies, and those imperfect ones; but he caused the unwritten laws of all the tribes that came under his rule to be compiled and reduced to writing. He also had the old rude songs that celebrate the deeds and wars of the ancient kings written out for transmission to posterity. He began a grammar of his native language.