

OUR LITTLE  
FRANKISH  
COUSIN OF LONG AGO



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Our little Frankish  
Cousin of long Ago

*by*

EVALEEN STEIN





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## Preface

↑he Frankish ruler, Charlemagne, was one of the greatest monarchs that ever lived. Great not merely because he was a victorious warrior and the kingdom he ruled was enormous, but rather because living as he did in a time when many of his people were lawless and ignorant, he saw clearly the worth of law and wisdom. He did all in his power to govern justly and to teach his people in all that best knowledge without which no nation can become truly civilized.

The world has never forgotten his great deeds, and deep in its heart it still cherishes him as one of its most honored heroes.

Many are the songs and legends that cluster about his name, and some day I hope you will read these, for I am sure you will enjoy them.

Meantime, perhaps you may be interested in learning something of the home life of this hero, so let me introduce Our Little Frankish Cousin of Long Ago, for he spent quite a while as page in the royal palace and so ought to be able to give you some idea of what folks did there. At least he can show you what Frankish boys did,— and, I do hope you will like him!

EVALEEN STEIN.

## PRONOUNCIATION OF PROPER NAMES

Aachen (ah'-ken)

Aix-la-Chapelle (aks-la-sha-pel')

Alcuin (al'-kwin)

Ay'-mon

Bag'-dad

Blaye (blay)

Bordeaux (bor-doe')

Bur'-gun-dy

Caliph (ka'lif)

Charlemagne (char'-le-mane)

Des'sen-berg

Durandal (doo-ron-dal')

Einhard (ine'-hard)

E'-mir

Haroun-al-Raschid (ha-roon'-al-rash'-id)

Ir'-min-sul

Mal'-a-gis

Marsilius (mar-see'-le-us)

Ol'-i-vant

Pa-der-born'

Pyrenees (pir'-e-neeze)

Rain'-olf

Roncesvalles (ron-thes-val'-yas)

## CHAPTER I

### Rainolf and the Palace Pages

◇ne summer afternoon, ever and ever and ever so long ago, along a crooked street in the old town of Aachen, a boy was walking slowly. He held in his hands a half-unrolled scroll of parchment covered with queer squares and circles and quantities of stars, and at these he was peering with an intent curiosity. Indeed, he was so absorbed in trying to make out the figures on the parchment that he forgot to notice where he was going; and presently, tripping over a large stone projecting from the narrow ill-paved street, down he tumbled, sprawling plump into the midst of a family of little pigs that had been following their mother just ahead of him.

Instantly there was a tremendous squealing as the frightened little beasts scurried off in all directions, and mingling with their squeals rose a chorus of merry shouts of laughter from a group of boys coming from the opposite direction.

“Ho! Ho! Rainolf!” they cried. “What were you trying to do? Catch a little pig for the palace cooks?”

Meantime Rainolf, having scrambled to his feet, began ruefully to brush the dust from his tunic of white linen and his legs wrapped in strips of the same material, cross-gartered with knitted bands of blue wool. One of the boys good-naturedly picked up his round blue cap, while another handed him the roll of parchment which had been the cause of his trouble. As the boy caught a glimpse of the tracings on the scroll, "Rainolf," he said, "I'll wager you have been to see Master Leobard the astrologer!"

"Yes," replied Rainolf, "he was a friend of my father, and mother said for me to go to see him when I came to Aachen. I hunted him up to-day, and he was very kind and made my horoscope for a present."

Here the boys gathered around Rainolf again as he unrolled his parchment, and they all looked it over, trying to puzzle out its meaning. Now, a horoscope was a chart showing the position of the stars in the sky at the hour of a baby's birth; and from these, the astrologer who made it, and who was supposed to know much about the stars and a good deal of magic besides, declared he could foretell the child's future.

People who could afford it in those days liked to have these horoscopes made for their children; but if one did not happen to have it done when a baby, it answered just as well later on to furnish the astrologer with the right

dates. This was the way Master Leobard had made the one for Rainolf, who had been born twelve years before, in a castle some distance from Aachen, whither he had lately been sent by his widowed mother so that he might be educated in the court of the great King Charlemagne who ruled the land.

As now the boys looked at the parchment, "Well," said one of them, "it's no use for us to try to make it out. What did Master Leobard say? Is your fortune good?"

"Yes, Aymon," answered Rainolf, "I think it's fairly good,—though he did say I would get some hard knocks now and then."

"So," laughed one of the boys, "I suppose you tumbled down just now because your stars said you had to!"

Rainolf smiled as he added, "At any rate, if I do get some knocks, he said I would be a good fighter and always conquer my enemies." And he drew himself up proudly.

"You are a good fighter now," said Aymon, his close friend, as he looked admiringly at Rainolf's straight figure and fearless face with its blue eyes and frame of flaxen hair.

"But," went on Rainolf, "he said there was something else I would like much better than fighting and that I would make a success of it, and that I would see something of the world." Just here the horoscope was cut short, as—"Look out!" cried one of the boys, and

they all hastened to flatten themselves against the wall of an old brown house in front of which they happened to be standing. For a cart was coming down the street, which was so narrow that anybody walking there had to get out of the way or else squeeze up against some of the brown-beamed wooden houses or dark little shops on either side.

Meantime the cart came trundling by. It was heavy and rudely built, its two wheels made from solid blocks of wood which had been hewn with an ax till they were tolerably round. The cart was drawn by a big white ox wearing a clumsy wooden collar; and his patient eyes scarcely blinked, nor did he turn his head as the heavy wheels bumped and creaked over the uneven stones of the street. Beside the cart walked a bare-headed peasant with red hair and beard and wearing a tunic of coarse gray homespun, his legs wrapped in bands of linen criss-crossed around them and on his feet shoes of heavy leather.

“Good-day,” said Rainolf as the man passed. But the peasant only turned his head and stared.

“Where are you going?” pursued another boy, undaunted by his silence.

At this, “To the King’s palace,” muttered the peasant as he prodded the ox with a long goad he held in his hand.

The ox started, the cart gave a jerk, and—"Squawk! Squawk!" came from a couple of geese within as with feet tied together they helplessly flopped against some bags of meal piled in front of them.

"Oh," said Aymon, standing on tiptoe trying to look into the cart, "never mind, Rainolf, that you didn't catch those little pigs! All these things are going to the palace kitchen!"

"Yes," put in another boy, pointing down the crooked street, "and there come a lot more!"

Sure enough, there were more ox-carts, and in between them even some flocks of sheep and a number of cattle. All these provisions the peasant folk had raised on the lands of the King near Aachen, and they were bringing them in, as they did once in so often, for the use of the large household at the palace. By and by, when these supplies were all eaten, the King and all the palace people would probably move off for a while to some other part of the kingdom where he had more farms to fill the royal larder.

As now the last cart went creaking along the street, "Where are you boys going?" asked Rainolf of the others, who, like himself, were all pages from the palace.

"Oh," said Aymon, "nowhere in particular. The King's chamberlain sent us to old Grimwald, the armorer, to

see if he had finished some new boar-spears for the big hunt next week. The palace armorer has more than he can do, so Grimwald is helping him. But the spears were not done.”

Meantime they all loitered along the street, now and then looking in the shops on either side. These were small and dark, more like little cubby holes than our idea of shops. There was no glass in their narrow windows, only heavy wooden shutters to be closed and barred at night. The shop-keepers sat on benches inside, most of them hard at work making their wares. There was the shoe-dealer sewing up shoes of thick leather cut in one piece—soles and all—or, if one preferred, he had sandals of rawhide with leather thongs to tie them on. There was the cloth-seller, whose wife had spun and woven the woollen stuffs and the rolls of linen and narrow colored bands in which the Frankish men wrapped and cross-gartered their legs; for no one had thought of trousers or stockings. Then there was the silk-dealer, whose wares had come from the town of Lyons, and goldsmiths beating out trinkets of gold and silver for the noble ladies.

Past these was a many-gabled inn; for as Aachen was the King's capital, numbers of people came there on different errands. Across from the inn was a grassy square and a low brown house where on market days one might

buy cheeses and chunks of meat and coarsely ground meal and a few kinds of vegetables and for sweetmeats, cakes made of meal and honey, for nobody had heard of sugar.

Near the market-house a juggler was standing on his head, but only a few beggars and children were watching him; and as the boys went along they merely glanced at him with a scornful "Pooh! Does he suppose we can't stand on our heads, too?" For jugglers were plenty and this one not so clever as most.

Beyond the square was the shop of Grimwald, the armorer, whose swords and helmets and spears were the best in Aachen. Grimwald was busy making a suit of armor by sewing hundreds of small iron rings on a tunic of leather, and beside him an apprentice was sharpening the boar-spears as he turned a great grindstone. Standing close to this was an elfish figure in a bright yellow tunic, a little man, not more than four feet high, with a peaked face and strange deep eyes, now shrewd and keen, now twinkling and kindly.

"Ho!" cried one of the boys, looking into the shop, "there is the King's jester!"

"Malagis," he called to the dwarf, "what are you doing in there?"

At this, Malagis came out, limping a little because of one crooked foot; though it was astonishing how he

could caper when he wanted to. "Oh," he said, "I was just standing by the grindstone a minute getting my wits sharpened. It would be good for all of you, too," he added, sweeping the group with a carved ivory staff he held, "only it would take so frightfully long!"

"One thing," said Aymon, laughing, "you don't need to sharpen your tongue, Malagis!"

Here the dwarf prodded him with his staff, just as the peasants prodded their oxen, and began capering along beside the boys.

Soon they passed the row of shops and came to dwelling houses, some with upper stories and peaked roofs, some low and rambling. On nearly all, heavy shutters stood open, showing within sometimes richly dressed ladies and their maids spinning and weaving or embroidering, and sometimes women in homespun bending over pots and pans in which things were cooking at big fireplaces while puffs of smoke curled out through the windows till you would have been quite sure all those houses were afire! But the boys knew better and paid no attention, for nobody had chimneys, and smoke was expected to get out as best it could.

Presently, "I'll tell you what let's do!" cried Rainolf. "Let's go back to the palace swimming-pool and see if there is a chance for a swim!"

“All right!” echoed the rest, and off they scampered past the last straggling houses till they came to the edge of Aachen, and looming ahead rose the great palace of the mighty King Charlemagne. After the plain wooden houses of the old town, it would have made you blink to see how very large and fine was this palace with its stone walls and tall towers and its many porticoes and doorways and cornices all of beautifully carved marble. In the midst of it was a wide courtyard with grass and flowers and numbers of marble statues.

Not far from the palace, in a pleasant meadow-land, was a large pool lined with blocks of stone and divided into two parts, in one of which was warm and in the other cold water; for it was fed from springs nearby, and some of these always ran warm. Indeed, the chief reason why King Charlemagne had built one of his finest palaces here was that he might bathe often in these warm medicinal springs. He had had the swimming-pool made large enough, however, for others of his household to enjoy it as well; though the boys would not have presumed to go in if the King himself were there. But when they came up, only a few soldiers and other humbler folk were swimming about, so all they had to do was to throw off their tunics and jump in, and soon they were splashing around like a school of porpoises.

Presently Malagis, who had not hurried, came along by the pool and, seeing Rainolf's parchment, which had fallen from his tunic and was about to tumble into the water, picked it up and placed a stone on it for safety, muttering as he did so, "There! One of those silly boys has been getting his horoscope! They're always in such a hurry to know their fortunes all at once,—as if they wouldn't find out soon enough anyhow! I could have told him myself, if I was a mind to, much better than old Master Leobard!" And Malagis poked the parchment contemptuously with his foot; for he was reputed something of a magician himself.

## CHAPTER II

### A Bit of History

Now, while the boys are in swimming, suppose we stop a minute and answer a few questions. If you children would like to know when this story begins, you will have to subtract something over eleven hundred years from this year, and that will leave you just three figures; which means that it was enormously long ago. For if you have subtracted right, you will find that the story begins in the year 800. And if you want to know where the old town of Aachen was, you will have to turn in your geographies to the map of Europe and look in the western part of Prussia; and there you will find that Aachen, which is very near to France, has also a French name, Aix-la-Chapelle, which means Aachen of the chapel, or church, because of the wonderful one which King Charlemagne built there.

But if anybody had told Rainolf or Aymon or the rest of those boys in swimming that the town was ever called Aix-la-Chapelle and that it was in Prussia, they would have stared and laughed; for the simple reason

that there wasn't any Prussia then. Neither was there any Germany or France as they are bounded in your maps, nor Belgium nor Holland.

"Dear me!" you say, "why, what in the world *was* there?"

Well, there was just the same big country with its hills and valleys and mountains and rivers, only it wasn't all settled and divided up and named as it is now. It was all ruled by King Charlemagne, and, to be sure, some of it to the east of Aachen was vaguely called Germany, but nobody could have told exactly how far Germany went. While west and north and south of Aachen, where is now Belgium and Holland and France, was mostly called Gaul. In this great region, many different kinds of people lived. Those in the southern part of Gaul were quite civilized, because once upon a time they had been conquered by the Romans who had taught them many things. Those up in the northern part of the kingdom were many of them still wild and savage; while those in the middle part were, as might have been expected, betwixt and between; that is, civilized in many ways and in others very rude and ignorant.

A few hundred years before our story begins, when the whole country was peopled by wandering tribes generally fighting each other, one tribe, called the Franks, being

stronger than the rest, managed to get possession of a large part of the land, and a Frankish chief named Clovis became King. Clovis conquered many of the other tribes and added to his kingdom; and though he had been a heathen to start with, he ended by being baptized and becoming a Christian.

But Clovis seemed to be the only great chief of his family; for after he died, his sons and grandsons and great-great-grandsons were all so stupid and good-for-nothing that the Frankish people did not know what to do with them. They did not like to take their crowns away from them, so they let them still be called Kings, but shut them up in their palaces or sometimes even carted them off to farmhouses in the country. And while each “Sluggard King”—for so they were nick-named—thus dawdled away his life, the kingdom was really managed by a man called the Mayor of the Palace.

By and by, there was a Mayor of the Palace named Pepin who was a very clever man and decided to make a change. He thought that as all the descendants of Clovis were too silly to rule and other people had to do all their work for them, it was high time to stop pretending they were Kings. By this time all the Frankish people had grown very tired of the foolish old royal family and quite agreed with Pepin. They said that as he had been such

a good Mayor of the Palace, he should be King instead of Childeric, who was the last of the family of Clovis and who was then shut up in a farmhouse where he did nothing but eat and drink and doze.

So the big Frankish warriors lifted Pepin up on their shields and showed him to everybody as their new King; and a very good one he made.

But it was Pepin's baby boy Charles who was destined to be the lasting glory of the Franks. When he grew up and inherited the kingdom, he soon earned the title of Charles the Great, or Charlemagne, which is the same thing. He extended his dominions till his kingdom spread over all that is now France and Germany and most of Italy and much more besides, and was one of the largest in the world; and not only was he a great warrior, but he was one of the very greatest and wisest rulers the world has ever seen. Indeed, he was so remarkable and so powerful that it is no wonder that for hundreds of years after his time people declared that he was at least ten feet tall, that in battle he could hew down dozens of his enemies at a single stroke, and that he was so wise that he knew instantly everything that went on in the farthest parts of his kingdom.

Yes, about Charlemagne and the Twelve Paladins, who were his bravest warriors, more wonderful stories

have been told and more beautiful songs sung than about any other King that ever lived—excepting only King Arthur of Britain and the Knights of the Round Table; and, of course, you have heard of them.

Now, Charlemagne was indeed very wise; and among other things he saw that the Franks had much to learn in many ways. And this brings us back to the King's palace; for he knew one thing particularly his people had to be taught, and that was how to build beautiful houses such as he had seen in his wars in Italy and other far countries. So when he wanted to build the palace at his favorite Aachen, he brought home with him not only Italian workmen to teach the Franks, but also quantities of fine marble columns and handsome mosaics and beautiful carvings.

And that was why the great palace there was one of the finest of the many belonging to Charlemagne. And that was why, too, the big swimming-pool was so well made; for the King had seen baths like it at Rome.

But really it is time Rainolf and all those other boys came out of it, for they have been swimming all the while we have been talking about the Frankish people! And, besides, Charlemagne himself has not yet come into the story, and surely you must want to see what such a wonderful King is like.

So splash! Out come the boys and run off to put on their clothes, and—if you look sharp—you will see the mighty Charlemagne come into the very next chapter; though he will come quietly and not as if he were entering a captured city. When he did that, people used to be terribly frightened; for marching before him would be such multitudes of soldiers with iron spears and coats of iron mail and iron leggings, and so many bold knights on horseback, wearing iron armor and iron helmets and iron breastplates and iron gauntlets and carrying iron battle-axes, and then the mighty Charlemagne himself clad in iron from head to toe, riding an iron gray horse, holding in one hand an enormous iron lance, and looking so—but let us wait till he comes into the story.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PALACE SCHOOL

The next morning, rather early, as usual, Rainolf and the other boys tumbled out of their beds in the wing of the palace where they slept, and as soon as they were dressed they ran out into the courtyard and began jumping over each other, for all the world like leap-frog! So that must have been it. By and by, "I'm hungry!" cried Aymon.

"So am I!" said Rainolf. "Let's find something to eat!"

And they all trooped off to the great palace kitchen where the cooks gave them some bread and cold meat and cheese, which they stood around and ate wherever they were not too much in the way. For breakfast was not made much of by anybody, nor set out except for the more important people of the palace. And it was never much like our breakfasts. There was always a great deal of meat for food, and for drink there was mead and wine. It had not occurred to people in those days that it might be agreeable to eat different kinds of things at different meals. And, besides, even if they had thought of it, they couldn't make their breakfasts very different