

**Charles Nodier**



***The Bibliomaniac***

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[goodpress@okpublishing.info](mailto:goodpress@okpublishing.info)

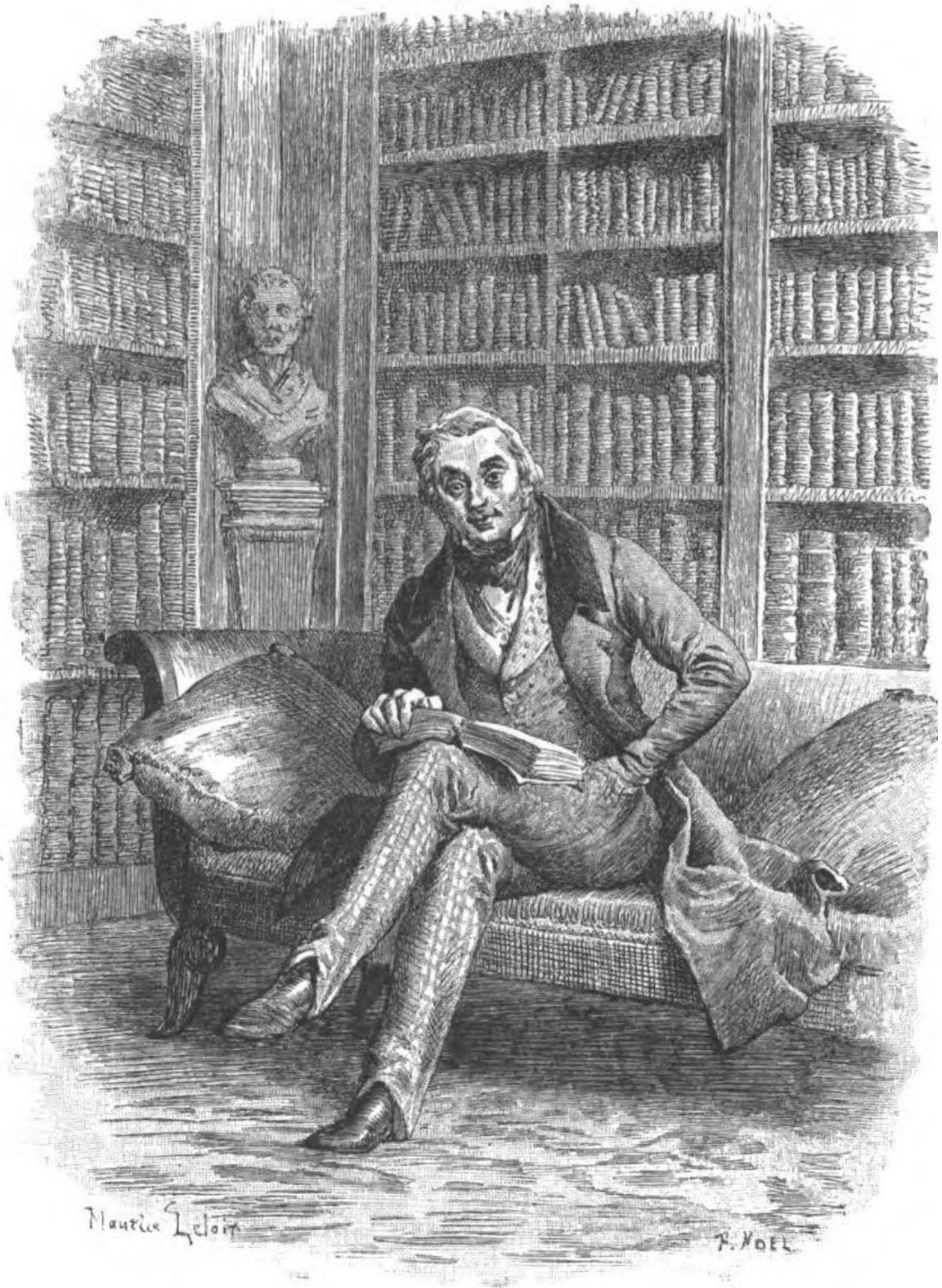
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Maurice Leloir

F. NOEL

# PREFACE

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“GOOD, AMIABLE NODIER,” are the words by which the world, apart from scholars, characterizes Charles Nodier. He is portrayed with a flowered vest, and a frock-coat with great lapels, finished by one of those collars which, by an easy play upon words, are called *les cols (l'école) des vieillards*. Nodier's collar, which turned up slightly at the points in a Prudhommeque manner, touched the corners of his refined, kindly mouth; but it is difficult immediately to associate the remembrance of certain books with this 1835 face, for time obliterates everything.

If Nodier belonged by right of his first literary impressions to the classical school, his liberal spirit soon identified itself with that of the romanticists. His face, full of genial originality, bore the characteristics of a man living between two literary epochs; but history little by little soon effaced all these tints and shades. Nodier was also one of those improvisators who talked their books. Contemporaries, in reading them, seemed to hear him speak, and a little imagination added to the surprises of these written conversations; but when the voice ceases the charm vanishes.

It is certain that the reader of to-day is somewhat at a loss in the company of a book of Nodier's, and feels very much as when, in a military panorama, he sees the wheel of a real caisson, and often a veritable cannon and cannon-ball, which at first sight blend with the painted canvas, until it is difficult to say where the actual ends and the illusion begins. If we read his reminiscences and studies of his own time in a credulous spirit, we shall constantly say, “Nodier is mistaken; what he tells us is not only wholly improbable but impossible,