

**FRANKLIN, A PLAY
IN FOUR ACTS**

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Franklin, a play in four acts by Constance D'Arcy Mackay

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CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY

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IN FOUR ACTS**

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CONSTANCE D. MACKAY

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FRANKLIN



Color-Tone, engraved for THE CENTURY, by H. Davidson.

THE YOUTHFUL FRANKLIN

FROM THE STATUE BY R. TAIT MCKENZIE.

On the Campus of the University of Pennsylvania.

Reproduced by courtesy of the sculptor and of The Century.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

FRANKLIN

BY
CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY



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1922

TO MIND
ANSWER

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PREFACE

In this play of *Franklin* the aim has been to give a picture of the man while keeping as close to historical data as possible. All of the events in the play have a foundation of fact, and all of the characters save Bretelle had their counterparts in Franklin's life: Bretelle represents an epitome of the forces against which Franklin strove—the meanness, the spying, the trickery with which he had to contend.

But dramatic exigency sometimes makes it necessary, on occasion, to temper fact with fancy, and in the sequence of events, story-cohesion has necessitated certain slight changes. Actions covering a longer period of years have had to be compressed into a few years' time. An instance of this is Deborah Read's marriage to Aaron Rogers. Mystery has surrounded, and always will surround this particular episode, and here the dramatist may perhaps be pardoned for supplying a motive. Again, in the matter of secret diplomacy the content and effect of the de Weissenstein letter has been heightened to make possible a climax. (See *Notes on Historic Sources*, page 188). Every one who has delved in the archives knows how matters stood before the French Treaty was signed. "It was then that Franklin quietly drew from his pocket a piece of paper stating an unexpected counter-claim, so cogent,

and of such kind that, rather than face it or dispute it, the English commissioners gave up their point at once. . . . On the day following this masterly stroke the preliminary treaty was signed, sealed and delivered."

Those wishing to follow the part which "secret documents" played in the negotiations can read of the matter in full in the *Diplomatic Correspondence*; in the volumes by Hale, and Parton, and in a fascinating study in *Everyman's Library*, edited by Ernest Rhys; while the prankish side of Franklin's statesmanship is quaintly revealed in the *Letters of Junius* by Benjamin Waterhouse. (See *Notes on Historic Sources*, page 190.)

As to the American Revolution—is it not now being reinterpreted by students of history, who see in a new light the curious phenomena of a German king on the throne of England defying the gallant pro-Americanism of such great Englishmen as Chatham and Fox in order to subdue through Brunswickian military measures a country whose citizens were mainly of British blood, a state of affairs referred to by Franklin himself as "*an Edict by the King of Prussia.*"

On the stage side of practical simplification for what may at first seem to be a highly elaborate production the reader is referred to the final chapter on staging. The cast is of necessity a lengthy one, but it is possible by duplication of characters to give it with a much smaller number. Suggestions along these lines are made on page 195.

FRANKLIN

(A Play in Four Acts)