

**THE FIVE
FRANKFORTERS: A
COMEDY IN THREE ACTS**

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The Five Frankforters: A Comedy in Three Acts by Carl Roessler

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The Five Frankforters

A Comedy in Three Acts

by

Carl Roessler

Authorized English Version

by

J. Fuchs

WITH A PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR
"CONCERNING THE JEWS OF FRANKFORT"

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CHARACTERS

OLD DAME GUDULA, *Arch-Mother of the House of Rothschild*

AMSCHEL

NATHAN

SALOMON

CARL

JACOB

} *Her sons*

CHARLOTTE, *daughter of Salomon*

GUSTAVE, *Duke of Taunus*

COUNT-PALATINE CHRISTOPHER MAURICE, *his uncle*

PRINCESS EVELINE, *daughter of the Count-Palatine*

PRINCE KLAUSTHAL-AGORDO

THE PRINCESS

COUNT FEHRENBURG, *Major-Domo at the Court of Duke Gustave*

MADAM DE ST. GEORGES

BARON SEULBERG

THE CANON

PRIVY COUNCILLOR YSSEL

THE DUKE'S CHAMBER-VALET

COURT-JEWELER BOEL

ROSE

LEZZIE

} *Domestics in Frau Guduld's house*

Concerning the Jews of Frankfort

By J. FUCHS

HERR ROESSLER'S idyll of the Rothschilds, now first made accessible to an English-reading public, has a tragical background, like every true comedy as distinguished from mere farce. The somber setting of its humors is the ancient Ghetto of Frankfort and the history of those who lived and suffered in it for many generations. Of this the *mise-en-scene* of "THE FIVE FRANKFORTERS" affords a palpable hint: the window of Frau Gudula's parlor in the family mansion of the Rothschilds discloses a view of Jews' Lane with its cramped and squalid misery. For a proper appreciation, on the part of the uninitiated reader, of the motives and soul-states of those who emerged from Jews' Lane into the roomier confinement of hostile surroundings without, a brief survey of the Frankfort Ghetto and the life therein is indispensably necessary.

I.

Among the fifty-six free towns of the Holy Roman Empire that emerged from the Westphalian Peace with their sovereign liberties intact, the city of Frankfort-on-the-Main was easily the first in civic greatness, abundant wealth and historical importance. Like nearly all considerable urban centers of the Rhinelands—like the

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Jews it harbored—it loved to trace its origin to Roman colonization. And like its lesser neighbors it oppressed, plundered, persecuted and insulted its Jews throughout the Middle Ages with an unrelenting zeal, which among the Frankforters was still alive when it had calmed down or died away in most other communities along the Rhine and its estuaries. The term "Middle Ages," in Jewish reckoning, has a topographical significance as well as a chronological one; nor does it in point of time, cover the same extent of years as in ordinary acceptance. To exemplify: topographically, the Middle Ages for our own contemporaries among the Jews extend eastward from the Vistula and to the south from the straits of Gibraltar. Chronologically speaking, they ended for the community of Frankfort in 1864, when all civic restrictions were removed from them, after a contest that lasted for fifty years preceding their final emancipation.

In the Middle Ages as reckoned by common tale of years, the Jews of the lower and middle Rhine held their rights, properties and lives at such uncertain tenure that their refugees from Christian persecution have peopled the Slavic East of the Continent, where their offspring reside unto this very day. Nor is their seed unknown in America, where every roster of notabilities in the various trades and professions of the country abounds with names of Rhenish Jews.

Of those who stuck fast to the soil, braving death, despoilment and civic humiliation, the Jews of Frankfort were the most tenacious. There was a reason. Within the shelter of Frankfort's town walls they had a better chance, despite all handicaps, to thrive in the only pursuits allowed to them than anywhere else on German ground. The city of Frankfort-on-the-Main has been known all the world over as a Continental trading center of the first importance from the middle of the fifteenth century to this present day. The network of its trade relations extended to London, Amsterdam and Venice—enormous distances in a steamless age—a generation ere Columbus set sail for the New World. Early allusions to its commercial greatness will be found in the works of Aeneas Sylvius and of Luther as well as in Elizabethan screeds and in the