



For 21/-  
The Mayor's Office  
Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 1915

THE ULTIMATUM

OF

EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE.

Ms. 3174  
LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE.  
Name of Play { *The Ultimatum*  
Threat { *His Majesty's Theatre*  
Date of Edition { *Feb 22 1915*

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LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE,

ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

Jan. 29th, 1915.

"THE ULTIMATUM" or "Every man has his price", a play in 2 acts  
by - to be produced at His Majesty's Theatre, on Feb 9th-15.

An original and effective little play. The "Ruler of a Great People" talks with his chiropodist and graciously intimates that he wishes him to serve the wine that evening at dinner when a great discussion is to be made, in recognition of the proverbial luck in a hunch-back. The chiropodist soliloquises shall he continue on the path of ambition or by poisoning the Ruler's liquor (1) avenge his parents who suffered in an attempted Revolution and (2) prevent the declaration of war and immeasurable miseries? In the next scene the Ruler is at dinner and hesitates to sign the declaration of war: ministers professors and relations urge him. The hunch-back chiropodist is about to give him a poisoned liquor when an order is conferred on him and he, delighted, swills the poison and says "let it rip". War is declared.

There is no overt allusion to Germany and I am sure Sir Herbert Tree will not have the bad taste to spoil the play by indicating the Kaiser in make-up etc., It is of no country or period. But the arguments, especially those of the professor, clearly indicate the mind's of Germany's rulers and are a fair picture of them.

Recommended for License,

(Sgd) G. S. STREET.

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ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

"The Ultimatum" or "Every man has his price," a play in two  
acts, by [unclear] To be produced at His Majesty's Theatre, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>.

An original & effective little play. The "Ruler of a Great People" battles with his chiefdomist & passionately intimates that he wishes him to save the war from becoming at Vienna was a great decision of to be made, a recognition of the inevitable back in a hand-back. The chiefdomist obligingly & should be contented as the father of a nation or by poisoning the Ruler's liquor (1) arrange his parents who suffered in an attempted Revolution & (2) prevent the declaration of war & consequent miseries? In the next scene the Ruler is at dinner & hesitates to sign the declaration of war: ministers, professors & relations urge him. The hand-back chiefdomist is asked to give him a poisoned liquor when an order is entered on him & he, delighted, offers the poison & says "let it rip! War is declared."

There is no overt allusion to Germany & the war seen in H. T. but with all the best taste to speak the play by identifying the Kaiser as make-up to. It is of no country a friend. But the arguments, especially those of the professors, clearly indicate the wants of Germany's rulers & are a fair picture of them.

Recommended for license.

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THE ULTIMATUM  
OR  
EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE.

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SCENE - The RULER's marble bathroom in the Palace.

(At the rise of curtain, the RULER of a Great People is discovered seated in his dressing-gown; the CHIROPODIST plies his trade.)

CHIROPODIST.      What remarkable corns your Majesty has!

RULER              Yes, they are ancestral - all my predecessors were noted for them.

CHIROPODIST      I have heard, your Majesty, that in the seventeenth century many of the Court wore tight shoes in order to cultivate the Royal infirmity - (correcting himself) - prerogative!

RULER              I daresay. Take care - you hurt me.

(CHIROPODIST takes from his tray some drops from a little bottle labelled 'Poison' and applies them with a brush to the royal foot, and resumes his pedicure)

You may continue to address us.

CHIROPODIST      (after a pause, choosing his topic) The weather, your Majesty, is very - very regrettable.

RULER              (with the divine-right manner) Yes, we are much displeased with the weather!

CHIROPODIST      Yet the peasants have prayed for fine weather for the occasion of your Majesty's name-day.

RULER              The prayers of peasants are not always heard. To-day is Friday. Is it not? I have a superstition against signing important documents on Friday. To-night it is the Ultimatum. (Bored) Oh, this war! What is the feeling among the people? You have leave to speak the truth.

CHIROPODIST Your Majesty is too gracious. The people, your Majesty, do not wish for war.

RULER The Minister of War assures me they do.

CHIROPODIST The people, your Majesty, will regard the decision of their King as the will of God. (Bowing over the royal foot)

RULER You are a clever fellow. You might go far.

CHIROPODIST (with momentary expansion) My hump has stood in my light, your Majesty.

RULER There is a saying of my great ancestor, "It is lucky to have a hunchback near you".

CHIROPODIST Yes, your Majesty, the common proverb says: "A hump is a misery to him who hath it, but it fills him of the straight back with contentment."

RULER We all have our compensations.

CHIROPODIST Yes, your Majesty, my mother always had a premonition that before I died a great honour would be conferred on me.

RULER I shouldn't wonder. By the by, I should like to keep you near me to-night. Your hump may bring me luck. I have to make a momentous decision. Now listen to me. I trust you - you have availed yourself of my permission to be truthful. I do not trust all my servants. Will you look to the wine to-night?

(THE CHIROPODIST cringes assent)

The royal Dukes and my Ministers are to dine at my table. Be near me to-night, my little hunchback.

(THE CHIROPODIST kisses the royal toes in deep obeisance. THE RULER OF A GREAT PEOPLE EXITS to his dressing-room. THE CHIROPODIST rises)



CHIROPODIST

It has come - the day, their day, my day! God of my fathers, keep me from madness. Mother, hold my hand from out of your grave! You said it should be! My hunger can be stilled - I can almost straighten my back with pride. (He crosses himself beneath the image of the Virgin) Help me in my hour. There are two roads - which shall I take? I have learned to flatter - it is my profession - I have walked across the plank - I am there - my ambition, my little ambition can be requited. I have blackmailed the world - I am in its palace. The open road is in front of me at last. I can move step by step, as others have done, nearer the throne - and then, who knows? But there is another road - the road where humanity toils or trudges - the road my father and mother trod when I was a little child. It was the revolution - my mother was torn from my father's arms - before his eyes she was degraded by the soldiery - then they shot him for an anarchist. This hump of mine - a soldier struck me with his gun - my shoulder shattered. In our exile every night my mother would stroke my back while she prayed that God would straighten me. She starved that she might sprinkle my hump with holy water. And here I am what I am. This is my moment - shall I fall to ease, to comfort, and convenience? I whose father shrieked for freedom as he fell. This war - I can prevent it. I see it coming on - I am not blind as those that make war - war for the vanity of a King, who made God in his own image. War for greed of commerce. Hundreds, thousands, millions of lives will be lost to satisfy the lust of five men! Can five hundred years of happiness compensate for one year's spoil of a monarch's sport? An Emperor of the Shambles declares war to make a madman's holiday. I can hear the yells of the poor deluded men in the trenches - they call it glory! I can see their stark bodies mangled and twisted in the frozen mud - they call it glory! I can smell the stench of their decay wafting disease through the land in the spring that is coming - they call it glory! I can read the outpourings of their hireling professors. I hear Christ's priests chanting their blessings on the holocausts - they call it glory! The moans of millions of mothers go up to God, unheeded by man. My mind is a mirage of ruined cathedrals, of devastated homes, of spectres of famished peoples - all these I see -



they call it glory! My little hand can stay all this. (He takes from his box the little bottle labelled 'Poison') Here is my ally - a few drops of this in his liqueur to-night, and it is done. (He tastes the poison) Revenge is sweet! I shall be the undying benefactor of mankind. After all, he is only one man, like myself. He who cuts the corns of a monarch knows the equality of man. Murder - yes. To kill one man is to be a murderer - to kill ten thousand is to be a hero! Strange is the logic of the world! What is he then who murders one to save millions? (He takes up his paraphernalia and EXITS)

(The SCENE changes to the private dining-room of the great RULER. Seated round the table are PRINCES, CABINET MINISTERS, A PROFESSOR, and A PRIEST. It is the end of dinner. There are signs of debauchery. THE RULER, steeped in wine, gazes before him with pale eyes. Papers are in front of him and an ink-stand, into which he dips his pen irresolutely. The clock strikes twelve)

WAR  
MINISTER

At twelve the decision was to be given - it has already struck.

A PRINCE

Octavian, sign.

(THE RULER hesitates and takes a liqueur from the hands of the now resplendent CHIROPODIST)

PRIME  
MINISTER

It is time to sign, your Majesty.

RULER

I am thinking.

PRIME  
MINISTER

A King should never think, your Majesty, when he knows his power. It is two minutes past the hour - history is rushing by. You are two minutes less powerful than you were at midnight.

WAR  
MINISTER

Might is right.

RULER

Is Might always right? (Turning to elderly Priest) Father, you have often told me that the true divine right of kings is peace. What did you say in your sermon during the Peace Conference? If the sacred head of the State were to pronounce himself to the world as the leader of Peace - if he will declare himself - if he will proclaim that the highest prerogative of kings - that their true



Divine right is universal peace - if in his greatness he will carry this ideal into effect, then he will go down the centuries not only as King of his land, not only as Emperor of the globe, but as the temporal saviour of mankind. Those were your words, father - Surely God is good.

PRIEST

Yes, your Majesty, very good. But now we are talking war. The heads of your people sanctify the sacrifice of your ideals.

RULER

I am wondering, at what point a King is justified for the sake of his country in sacrificing his ideals.  
(He takes another liqueur)

PRIEST

His conscience must decide.

PROFESSOR

Ideals are only official ideals when they have concrete foundations. Ideals must be backed by cannon, or left alone. With all submission to your Majesty, man is but a brute - we all devour each other if we can. Our rivals are sunk in the sloth of what is called humanitarianism. The new religion of so-called thinkers and feelers threatens to become a force which may so miseducate the masses, that the workmen of the world may sweep away our own Culture of intellectual materialism by a universal strike for peace. This new movement, whose praise is being sung by poets and seers, must be throttled before its growth shall have become a menace to our fatherland. Already the people are singing the hymns of the new religion of humanity in secret places. Socialism is rife in our land. Now is the moment to crush it for a hundred years and so preserve the ancient dynasty of which your Majesty is God's chosen head, and secure the supremacy of our race.

(Great cheers ring out from the Square from many thousand voices. Here and there angry imprecations too are heard. The cheers come nearer and nearer and the jingle-jingle of approaching cavalry is heard below)

RULER

Are they cheering me?

CHORUS OF  
MINISTERS &  
PRINCES

(surrounding the RULER) They are cheering the war. They are cheering the Prince - he waves his hand to them.

RULER

Ingrates - is my popularity then waning?

PRIME  
MINISTER

(his watch in hand) You are twelve minutes and fifteen seconds less popular than you were at midnight, your Majesty.



RULER (twisting the quill pen in his hand) That is the voice of the people!

PRIEST Vox populi, Vox Dei!

WAR MINISTER It is the voice of the Army!

(The royal DUKES AND MINISTERS, PRIEST AND PROFESSOR surround the RULER, cajoling, flattering and brow-beating him in turn. A military band blares out the National Hymn in which a hundred thousand voices join. RULER takes the pen once more; exerting himself to the great effort, he beckons to the CHIROPODIST, who makes to serve the liqueur)

CHIROPODIST Now is my moment! (Taking from his pocket the little bottle labelled 'Poison', he is about to pour it into the glass when a royal DUKE approaches him with something glittering in his hand)

ROYAL DUKE (TO CHIROPODIST) In recognition of your valuable services His Majesty desires me to confer upon you the order of the Golden Lamb, of the second class. (Pins decoration on his breast)

CHIROPODIST (Overcome, mechanically, as in a dream, he clasps the bauble in his hand, then hesitates, gasping)  
O Mother, Mother!

RULER It is war!

CHIROPODIST Let it rip! (He spills the poison on the floor)

(THE RULER OF A GREAT PEOPLE signs the Ultimatum. THE CHIROPODIST shrugs his hump.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

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