



21st July 1915
Metropolitan Music Hall

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MRS
MASON'S
ALIBI.

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By Harry M. Vernon

Add Ms 66105 F

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| No. 3588 | |
| LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE. | |
| Name of Play. | { Mrs. Mason's Alibi |
| Theatre | Metropolitan Music Hall. |
| Date of Licence | 21st July 1915. |

The property of:-

H.M. Vernon,
Heathfield,
Maidenhead.



LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S OFFICE,
ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

17th July 1915.

"MRS MASON'S ALIBI", play in one act by Harry M. Vernon, for production at the Metropolitan Music Hall.

Mason is a surgeon who has invented a wonderful anaesthetic. Stern, a German extra-villain, tries to make Mrs Mason give him the formula in Masons's absence. They have a violent struggle and then Stern tells her that he was the student who twenty years before, when she was at school in Germany, had decoyed her to his rooms and forcibly seduced her. But it appears that it was really her sister Margaret. Then Mason returns and challenges Stern to an immediate duel. Stern, however, terrified, ~~does~~ of heart failure. It is rather a painful little play, but there is nothing indecent in it or any reason why it should not be

Recommended for License.

(Sgd.) G. S. STREET.

GS

July 17th 1915.



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ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

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To be produced at the Metropolitan Music Hall.

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Stone, a German extra-villain, tries to make Mrs. Mason live
his formula in Mason's absence. They have a violent
struggle & then Stone tells her that he was her student
who twenty years before, when she was at school in Germany,
had deceived her to his rooms & forcibly seduced her.
But it appears that it was really her sister Margaret.
Then Mason returns & challenges Stone to an immediate
duel. Stone, however, terrified, dies of heart failure.

It is rather a painful little play, but there is
nothing indecent in it on any reasonable stage it should not be

Recommended for license.

G. J. Street.

17/15
H3
for completion

CHARACTERS

MRS MASON

BARON STERN

JOHN MASON

MAN SERVANT.

SCENE: Mrs Mason's Drawing Room.
A Hotel in Cairo, Egypt.

Mason

(Very pleasantly surprised) I was surprised to receive your card Stern - thought you had gone to Alexandria.

TIME: 7.30 p.m.

Stern

(Smiling, he speaks in a somewhat pronounced rolling of his tongue, with a German otherness) I must in ----- a very over-accoutation or attempt at direct, which has effect and is unnecessary to portray the character. It is forbidden to think - all that is arranged in - well, elsewhere. It is but a step.

Mason

Oh, then you diplomats are also soldiers. Your's the battle of brains, - ours the more strenuous definition of the word - We surgeons too you know, consider ourselves - er - well -

MRS
MASON
ALIBI.

The room is appointed in keeping with the atmosphere of an Hotel in the Orient. The furniture being mostly of the kind known as "wicker" - There is a door C. leading to private Hallway. This is "backed" by a door leading to Public or Hotel Hallway.

Right, a couch covered with bright chintz. Up stage a small table on which telephone L.C. a table on which photographs and flowers. L. up stage a cabinet of Oriental design. At rise of CURTAIN MASON is closing and locking leather dispatch wallet. He takes note book from pocket opens it, glances at writing therein, returns to pocket, then looks at his watch. The door C. opens. ENTER SERVANT in Hotel livery, who holds door open permitting BARON STERN to ENTER. SERVANT closes door, EXITS.

Mason

(Very pleased to see him) I was surprised to receive your card Stern - thought you had gone to Alexandria !

Stern

(Smiling, he speaks throughout with a pronounced rolling of his "R's", as would a German otherwise fluent in the English language - over accentuation or attempt at dialect, would mar effect and is unnecessary to portray the character) It is forbidden to think - all that is arranged in - well, elsewhere. It is but to obey.

Mason

Oh, then you diplomats are also soldiers. Your's the battle of brains, - ours the more strenuous definition of the word - We surgeons too you know, consider ourselves - er - well -

Stern As having a "cut in" so to speak. (Notes dispatch wallet) You are not travelling ?

Mason I am called to Assuan this evening - None the less pleased to see you, - if only for the moment.

Stern You think you are remaining - long ?

Mason (Smiling) It is forbidden to think - all that is arranged - elsewhere.

Both laugh at Mason's now turning Stern's remark against him.

Stern I am sorry - I was going to propose a short trip for tomorrow - the first cataract !

Mason My dear Stern by all means. I am sure Mrs Mason will be delighted to join your party - Good of you really - I shall be with you in spirit.

Stern I wished to speak further with you about your discovery - the new anaesthetic, which deadens sensibility to pain - One might cut one's finger off, or - or - receive a bullet wound without knowing it for hours, providing your discovery has been given in food, or drink beforehand - isn't it so ?

Mason (Not inclined to discuss the subject) I am not free to discuss that matter old man, beyond the few words already mentioned to you.

Stern (Quickly changing the subject) No matter what we spoke of my dear Mason, during our outing -anything to break this awful monotony.

Mason (Going to him and speaking meaningly) Providing the monotony is not seriously broken eh ? - Come, Stern, between ourselves - unofficially - it looks dark, eh ?

Stern What looks dark ?

Mason This war cloud - Your Government.

Stern Wunderbahr !! - The moment our relations with some other Power become slightly - er - unstitched - you English scent war ! My dear man - good friend believe me, our one desire is peace - everlasting Peace. There will be no war - in any event your country would not be concerned.

Mason My country is ever concerned in the welfare of its friends, and the strict observance of its obligations - I -

Stern We have been friends these many years! I do not forget my ailment - my weak heart - and that you more than once kept life within me. On my word there will be no war, and I in my position should know, is it not so ?

Mason (More cheerfully) I think we both hope for the best.

Stern We can but carry our hope to the Throne of the Almighty and leave the rest to Providence - I am a great believer in what is called - Providence. During your absence I must keep to my - "Three times a day in water", eh ?

Mason I'll leave the prescription in case my stay is a prolonged one.

He is about to make out prescription but his mind is evidently not quite at rest as to the fear of war. He turns from the table where he was about to write, goes to Stern places a hand on either of Stern's shoulders.

Mason See here, Stern - my daughter - my only child is as

you know at school in Belgium, almost on the German frontier. Answer me this. - Do you think I could find a better school for her just now, - other than in Belgium? - Before you answer, - I have more than once kept life within you.

Stern Mason, your daughter is as safe where she is as if she was in London.

A second's pause, the men looking each other in the eye.

Mason (Pats him on the shoulder as though in thanks and satisfaction } Mrs Mason will be glad to hear you say that I know.

ENTER MRS MASON R. with light dust coat over arm.

Mrs Mason John, I've brought your - (Sees Stern)

Mason Helen dear, Baron Stern is here - he asks you to join his party for a Nile excursion tomorrow.

She denotes displeasure but makes an effort to hide the fact from her husband. She gives her hand to STERN but withdraws it ere he can kiss it which he attempts to do.

Mrs Mason (To Stern) It is very good of Baron Stern but I am afraid -

Stern I beg you will not disappoint us Mrs Mason, - several ladies from Shepherds and the Gezirah are going as well - they expect you.

Mason Promise me you will go, Helen. The outing will do you good - I want you to.

Mrs Mason Yes John - I - I - will go.

Mason (To Stern) You will stay to dinner, Stern, the usual hour - in the general room downstairs - Mrs Chalmers will be at our table - a bit talkative - she's an American you know - her only fault.

Stern Which ? Being an American or being talkative ? Sometimes a woman's fault is her redeeming feature.

Mason Rather clever that - I'll think it out in the train. Goodbye Helen - the Baron would say "Aufweidersehn" (Kisses her, then to Stern shaking him by the hand) Let's hope a stitch in time will save nine eh ?

EXITS. STERN leisurely walks to door, sees that Mason passes through outer door then turns to Mrs Mason.

Stern - Am I forgiven dear lady ?

Mrs Mason (Quietly, but with great dignity) Baron Stern - If I have refrained from telling my husband of your conduct, it is for various reasons. Firstly because I believe you had had - sufficient champagne, secondly because you do not quite appreciate the distinction between English ladies and the women of your own Country - Had I informed John at the time you know what the consequences would have been, my failure to do so then, precludes my doing so now. You will, of course understand the impossibility of my being in your company, unless my husband is present.

Stern Whatever is popular - is wrong. I offer a lady a chaste salute - nah ! Now I am a criminal.

Mrs Mason Exactly, honourable men do not attempt liberties with the wives of their friends. Yours a doubly despicable action, considering what John's medical science has done for you.

Stern Assisted dear lady by your oftentimes clever nursing.

(Half mockingly) The light of your eyes has been the Beacon which called back from the darkness of despair the ship of health. It would be awful to die, in the face of such - possibilities.

Mrs Masom (Quietly) Ten years in Berlin have familiarized me with the culture of your race - You neither insult or anger me your breed is simply a matter of degree - bad and worse. Need I call the servant to show you to the lift ?

Stern That would be a great indiscretion. All the servants here are - well, country-men of mine. You would only create a scandal, as the servant might circulate a story other than to the well being of your reputation.

MRS MASON touches electric bell,
STERN stands between her and the door leading to her private apartment.
She rings a second time. STERN is most unconcerned, hands in pockets, after a slight effective pause the door C. opens. ENTER SERVANT.

Mrs Mason Please show Baron Stern to the lift.

Stern Gar nicht nöwendich - gehen sie wieder Zurück.

The SERVANT gives STERN a quick glance.
Turns, EXITS, closing door after him.

Mrs Mason (Calling after him) Page - Page -(Turns to Stern)
How dare you - how dare you ?

Stern I simply said I required no guide. Come Mrs Mason - we are not children. In a silly moment flushed with the wine of your country - which is also its curse - If I may say so - whisky - I kissed you. Well ? Women are kissed every day ! - Instead of taking it as a compliment, you make a great fuss - over one - little chaste salute. Dozens of men have kissed my wife - she is all the more adorable for it. The

experience has been to my advantage. What I could not teach her, others have ! - Besides, your affectation of outraged virtue does not deceive me, we Germans understand women - well.

Mrs Mason

Sir - when the Creator had completed the world, he populated a corner of it with Germans, as an afterthought - it being necessary to balance so much good with a little evil - that "little evil" has grown into a canker from which the rest of the world has ever shrunk with loathing - I will tell my husband what I failed to tell him before - your behaviour here this evening is as inexplicable as it is monstrous. John will know how to deal with you.

She turns as though to leave the room. STERN speaks quickly and for the first time sternly, his demeanour heretofore having been half humorous, half-mocking

Stern

Madame, (Looks at his watch) My object in calling this evening was quite other than to listen to compliments or to waste either your time or mine. Although I have taken the occasion to remark on the episode of what you termed my rudeness. We have known quite well that your husband was going to Assuan and it is because of that knowledge that I am here - I seek cher Madame a little information - information which you can assist me in obtaining. Your husband no doubt would not have favoured me, but you under the circumstances, will do me the honour.

MRS MASON goes to telephone takes receiver in hand.

Ah the telephone ? Hum - the telephone is disconnected, and you saw what happened when you rang for a servant.

MRS MASON getting no reply, slowly replaces receiver as it dawns upon her that there is something most

ulterior behind Stern's behaviour.

Mrs Mason - There - there is something back of your strange behaviour. You would not, knowing the consequences, dare these things under normal circumstances.

Stern Necessity knows no law - I would dare anything in the course of my duty, friendships are worth only what they will bring. - Mrs Mason, among your husband's belongings, is a small steel box about - er - so big. It contains the formula of an anaesthetic which if given in food to - let us say soldiers being going into action, stifles all pain in case of wounds, thus a man would not be incapacitated unless his wound be fatal. (Denotes size) The box is lettered with his initials and rank in the British Army. He did not have it with him when he left this room. Ergo - it is still here. Until yesterday it was in the second drawer of the dressing table in your boudoir, - unfortunately - locked. I have Mrs Mason, to ask that you be good enough to deliver that box to me.

Mrs Mason Instead of treating you for heart failure, my husband should have diagnosed your case as one of insanity. You should be under restraint. (Moves towards door.)

Stern If you do not carry out my wish without further comment - it will be necessary for me to resort to force.

Mrs Mason What is the meaning of all this ? Has the diplomatic service of the German Government stooped to burglary, or are you -

Stern (Breaking in on her line) Madam - we will not discuss the German Government; I intend to possess myself of the formula referring to the Anaesthetic discovered by Mr Mason - I shall not ask you - again.

Mrs Mason The anaesthetic ? - (She realises that one thing only could warrant Stern's adopting such a measure and making such a demand) Why - you - don't - suppose - my God ! - it's war - Germany has

declared war !-you would not dare otherwise -

Stern

No ! It is England, who will declare war - at this very moment your cabinet is deliberating, deliberating !! We have deliberated for forty years ! And ere another sun lightens the face of the Sphinx, or tips with gold the summits of the Pyramids there (Points) in the desert sands, we will have come to the realisation of our dreams - the prayers of the mighty German Empire - The Day ! - we will wipe once and for all from the face of the earth - the enemies of the fatherland. The home of culture progress and enlightenment. Nothing can stand in our way, God man or devil ! I may as well tell you, - on the stroke of twelve the world will know. The sweat of fear will dampen the brows of Germany's foes - weak kneed hypocrites and effeminate defenestrates, who's machinations have long enough deprived us of our place in the sun. We will put the world's house in order, a clearance of all that stands between Germany and the future - Germany at last shall come into her own !

Mrs Mason

And with her usual bravery in the person of yourself - Germany tells these things to a woman !! You will find men millions and millions of them, ready to hear what you have to say, and their answer less long winded or boastful will be none the less emphatic. Single handed you are the greatest cowards imaginable, a fact exemplified by your behaviour here - you are of the nobility - a cultured German, yet your behaviour is that of a poltroon. I shudder to think of the lesser intelligent and coarser bred. They as you, are inferior to the pigs of our farmyards. Do you think you frighten me because I happen to be alone ? - I am an Englishwoman ! Our race has ever been the master of yours, individually, collectively, on land on sea. Yours a nation of boast and swagger ours of deed and silence. Your kind make excellent waiters, and polish our boots quite well - I have such in my scullery at home. They differ from you in that they know their place, you do not - you have as much chance of securing my husband's private concerns, as you have of "sweeping the face of the earth," as you express it of the nations who will oppose you. - If as you say, you have forced England to arms - May the Lord have pity upon you - Go. (Points to door.)

Stern Altogether admirable - I am always a good audience for a lady - especially one who is so clever an actress - you have fooled your husband these many years Mrs Mason, but your assumption of bravery does not deceive me as has your pretence of prenuptual virtue gulled your husband.

Mrs Mason What - do you mean ?

Stern Unless the dispatch box for which I have asked, is forthcoming immediately. I will get it myself - the while entertaining you with a story which will take your mind back some few years. At all events it will make the telling to your husband of our little scene this evening look less black for me. If it does not dissuade you altogether from telling him.

Mrs Mason When my husband returns - I promise you a thrashing you will not so soon forget.

Stern A wasted threat - your husband will not return, at least for some days. When he reaches Assuan he will learn that the Dogs of War are about to be unloosed - he will remain at Headquarters. By that time I shall be - where I shall be - Madam - I wish only to glance - to take a copy of the formula of the Anaesthetic. The little story of years ago may interest you sufficiently to permit of my doing so, otherwise - I must take the box with me, and look through it at my leisure.

Mrs Mason Whether my husband returns tomorrow or in a month, whether you are here or elsewhere your punishment will come. Providence will see to that.

Stern Enough of this - patience is a virtue, but even virtue has its limitations - Permit me to pass !

She moves toward door and stands in his way.

I warn you that a scene means nothing to me. The servants here to a man are Germans - likewise the

Stern

One never forgets the joy of mastering an unwilling woman - The blonde young man has altered much in the passing years - but his masterfulness has not deteriorated - That formula Mrs Mason -

MRS MASON has struggled to her feet during these lines and by the help of the back of the couch has again reached a point just in front of the door, when STERN has finished speaking she has recovered and speaks with great intensity and slowly, permitting every word to have full weight.

Mrs Mason

So - after twenty years I am in the presence of the monster who took advantage of a defenceless, sixteen year old girl, a libertine who spoke of culture, of "noble things" of art, music, and the classics, who worked on the feelings of an impressionable young girl by his reference to his love for his mother and sisters, whom he wished the girl to meet and know. Who spoke of the sacred German home life. The exalted friendship as between those of artistic temperament. You - you are the beast who inveigled a child to your rooms who strangled and struck her insensible - you - How you succeeded in leaving Munich thus escaping punishment you alone know. Even your name was a lie - you escaped then, but as there is an Almighty - you shall not escape now. You thought to terrorize me with your admission, you've made a mistake on that score - Your own confession identifies you - but as to my identity - you're wrong !

Stern

Oho ! Madame would prove an alibi !

Mrs Mas on

Often when you alluded to 'Seeming to have known me in other days' John and I have wondered at your meaning - never dreaming that you were the despoiler of poor Margaret's honour. We thought only of your illness and that your words were the dreamings of a sick man.

Stern

(As though faintly remembering that his victim's name was Margaret) Margaret's Honour.

Management, any outcry from you has already been prepared against - out of my way.

He attempts to pass, taking hold of her by the shoulders. There is a struggle. She gets her hand between his collar and throat and with her knuckles succeeds in making it difficult for him to breathe. She pushed him backward. He wrenches himself free swearing in German (Verdammtes Unglück, i.e. Dam the luck) the effort throws him some distance away. She takes up a stool and as he again comes toward her, breaks it over his shoulder. In a terrible fury he takes her by the throat and half drags and half pushes her toward the couch, and finally onto it, kneeling himself thereon with one knee.

Stern

It occurs to me that you found yourself in a somewhat similar position rather twenty years ago. Do you remember (Steps back) You were a handsome young girl of sixteen, attending a school at Munich, Fräulein Müller's was it not ? - she often placed her English girls in the way of the students - Do you recall the youth at the military academy whom you met at the Conservatoire concert ? Who showed you great attention for a time and who eventually succeeded in luring you to his rooms - you believing he lived with his parents. (Laughs) There was a couch there, was there not ? You resisted at that time as you have resisted here though in a different cause. An object is to be gained now as it was gained then. (Goes close to her) It was gained you know.

During this speech MRS MASON in tense pantomime denotes a knowledge of what Stern is saying - the bringing to her mind in all its horror of an incident the explanation of which is to follow.

Mrs Mason

How - how - came - you - to - know - of - this ?

Mrs Mason Yes Margaret - my twin sister. It was my husband's family who sent her to school in Munich - we were orphans - I had never been away from the Mason's home from my fifteenth year until my husband took me from there as his wife.

There is the bang of a closing door followed by the opening of the door C. ENTER MASON quickly, he stops in front of door.

Mason Baron Stern, - almost the moment I reached the street, I learned that of which you had full knowledge when you entered this room, a few minutes ago. The German Armies are marching on Belgium. There will be no war, eh ? I refrain from commenting on your lies to me. There's the door.

Mrs Mason Wait ! - John, our search is ended. The Otto Altman of twenty years ago stands there ! - Baron Stern is the guilty man. In the attempt to get possession of your despatch box he tried to intimidate me in the belief that I and not Margaret had been his victim. - He - struck - me - John !

A moment's effective pause.

Mason Leave us my dear.

MRS MASON EXITS.

Stern My dear Mason, my time is limited. I have had about enough, - another time I -

Mason (Very quietly) You are quite right. Your time is limited, and you have also had about enough - you have had twenty years of life which should have been forfeited long ago. Apart from which - you have struck my wife. You suffer from heart failure - that will not prevent your firing a pistol. Only one of us can leave this room. You shall have the - dog's chance.

Goes to cabinet, takes therefrom
two pistols, STERN much agitated,
hand to throat denoting abject
cowardice.

Stern Mason - I - I do not make good practice with the
pistol, I - I - am a better swordsman - at another
time - later if you insist but, I - my heart.

Mason You'll answer to me now and here.

Stern No Mason - no. I - I - feel weak - give me - some
of the medicine - quick Mason - my heart again -
No Mason I - Help !! (Falls across table)

MASON, forgetting all else but that
he is a medical man, rushes over to
help Stern. He drops a pistol in
his hurry, there is a shot off
denoting that the pistol has been
discharged in falling. MASON goes
to Stern feels his heart also pulse
as MRS MASON ENTERS quickly, having
heard the shot.

Mrs Mason (In half whisper) John - you - you've killed him !

Mason (A hand on Stern's heart) No, no - Providence has
saved me the trouble.

C U R T A I N.

-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-