

6 NOV 1913
THE DAILY CHRONICLE

MISS MAUD ALLAN
INTERVIEWED.

STORY OF HER INDIA
OFFICE VISITS.

Miss Maud Allan sailed for India a week ago. She left quietly, and her letter, published in "The Daily Chronicle" yesterday, was issued from her home in Regent's Park on her cabled instructions from Brindisi.

Before she left London she gave to a "Daily Chronicle" representative—for delayed publication—details of interviews with officials at the India Office concerning her tour.

"Yes, I am going to dance in India after all," she said, "in spite of irresponsible cables from Bombay and Calcutta policemen, and funny little letters from 'Constant Readers.'"

"Why was I silent when those scare cables were being fished for from India and landed over here? Because I did not think I was answerable to irresponsibility. I was sorely tempted at one time to reply to 'A British Consul' who had not the 'Britishness' to disclose his name, but I bit down my disgust instead, and waited and hoped he was proud of his act of British manhood in, as it were, attacking a woman from a darkened doorway.

"The last poor flicker of distress was a cablegram from Bombay, published in certain English newspapers, to the effect that the police there would certainly not permit the performance of the Salome dance. I suppose the fact is of little consequence to my enemies, now that they have had their little excitement at my expense over my proposed visit to India, to learn that it was never for a moment my intention to perform the Salome dance there. However, that is the case.

"One thing I was determined upon, whether I went to India or not, and that was the removal of the stigma cast on me and my art by the almost indecently clumsy fashion in which this campaign against me was engineered. This, I thought, was intolerable, and the officials at the India Office thought so too. For that at least they have my gratitude. . . . They were sympathetic enough in theory, but in practice their attitude was far from helpful.

OFFER TO ABANDON THE TOUR.

"I offered not to go to India if they, officially, would ask me not to do so. But they could say nothing. While agreeing that I had been shamefully treated by Bombay policemen, 'Constant Readers,' and mysterious 'British Consuls,' they were quite content to let these outside folk do their work for them.

"The interviews at the India Office, which extended over two or three weeks, promised at first to result in a happy compromise. We had almost arranged that my dances should be given in a more or less private way, like the more intellectual and thoughtful dramatic works in England—that is, in the Stage Society manner known as 'by subscription.' We talked of special theatres and institutes and 'selected' audiences, and other conditions in which I might, with safety to the Indian Empire, perform such furious orgies of moral corruption as Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song,' Rubinstein's 'Valse Caprice,' Anitra's Dance' from Grieg's 'Peer Gynt' suite, and so on.

"But in the end they preferred to be ruled in the matter, as the fashion is to-day, by country clergymen and anonymous letter-writers; and here I am, going out to fight my own battle in my own way and to face the consequences like a woman!

NO FEAR OF HER CRITICS.

"Before I go, I would like to read to you some English newspaper descriptions, written only three or four years ago, of the performances that are going to shame the white woman in the eyes of the natives of India and entirely wreck her prestige among them." Knowing, as you probably do, something of the English and American entertainments that are enjoyed by mixed audiences at the Bombay and Calcutta theatres, you will be amused. I am represented here (reading from her 'cuttings'), as:

expressing all the noblest arts, the music of the masters, the rhythm of imaginary poems, the triumphs of Greek sculpture and of Botticelli's brush.

"And here a third—though it is typical of a hundred:

One is moved by the essential youthfulness and innocence of her interpretations, just as one is moved by the dainty sweet seriousness of children dancing.

"I have read those little extracts to you only to show you what the English women in India are alleged to be afraid of. . . . Do I hope to emerge safely from my experiment in India? Frankly, I do. I have no fear even of the lady president of a branch of the Young Women's Christian Association, in a remote Indian village, who has petitioned the Viceroy to pack me off home again as soon as I arrive! That sort of opposition I have never found difficult to deal with.

"I'm afraid you will think me very cynical; but how can I help being so? In Africa there was much the same fuss made over my performances—before they were seen. But when the sweet Christian women out there, who had been petitioning authorities of all kinds and colours to have a fellow creature condemned without a hearing, learned that I had weathered the storm and was being patronised by intellectual people, they flocked round me—for free seats and 'benefit matinees' for the objects in which they were interested! I say again, I know my world too well—and I sometimes wish I didn't!"

RECORD BOOKINGS IN BOMBAY.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)
BOMBAY, Nov. 5.

Bookings for the performances of Miss Maud Allan opened here to-day. An immense crowd of Europeans and Indians besieged the office, overturning the counter. The bookings far exceed all records.

TELEPHONE, MAYFAIR 1108.
CABLE, BERYLDEKE LONDON.

WEST WING,
OUTER CIRCLE,
REGENT'S PARK, N.W.

To J. C. Walton Esq Sept 23 '13

Dear Sir

I have received your letter of the 21st inst. and have duly noted the contents but in order that there may be no misunderstanding I wish to point out to you that the suggestion of doing Subscription Performances was only made as an alternative in the event of the Viceroy for political reasons, deciding it necessary to prohibit my Public Performances.

At the present moment however, you have not informed me that the

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(2)

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any objection to my
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discussion and acceptance.
May I point out to you
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Sept 23 1913

(3)

35

concerned, as I have entered into many contracts, have engaged steamship passages, and am under obligations involving a matter of \$1200 per week for a lengthy period from the 26th of the present month. I think, therefore, that I have the right to ask that you should at once give me some definite information, as a part from the heavy pecuniary loss, the position which you have taken up in communicating with me informally and refusing to do so in a definite and official manner is causing me great anxiety and is very prejudicial to my reputation.

Sep 30 1913

(4)

In common fairness and equity if the Government of India considers for Political reasons that it is undesirable for me to appear in India I consider they should at once so inform me.

As I have my passage booked to sail on Oct 13th I shall rely upon at least

the courtesy of a definite reply before the end of the current week.

Yours faithfully
Mand Allan

P.S. - It must not be assumed that I shall be prepared to accept any prohibition as my present feeling would be to contest the legality thereof.

Mand Allan

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absolute & different in
her answer

The court...
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That I shall...
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J. & P.
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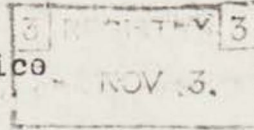
London

4th November 1913

To

The Commissioner of Police

London.



Sir

As Maud Allen will be going out to Dancoin India, I hope she will not degrade the English women before Indian eyes, as she certainly will if she appears on the stages in India scantily attired, or in very low necked short skirted dresses, skirts above the knees. I have lived in India several years, and have visited the Zenanas of many High Officials and Nabobs up to the present day and I know what the Indian ideas are, such low necked, short skirted frocks, and scanty attires as are seen on the English stages of today will produce bad opinions and effects in India.

May I suggest, that the Commissioners and Superintendents of Police in Bombay and other Presidencies and Districts of India and the East should issue instructions informing all Dancers of the Stage, that they are not to appear in scanty attire and that dresses are not to be worn lower than four or five inches below the neck and skirts not shorter than three or four inches below the knees."

I am, Sir

Yours obediently

"Beatrice"

Copy

Lawrence

Relevance of these enclosures explained at start of disc
India Office,
Whitehall, S.W. (pp1-2)

28 September, 1913.

Lord Crews,

In company with Mr. Walton, who had brought the personal negotiations to the point already reported before my return from leave, I called yesterday afternoon by appointment at Miss Maud Allan's house in Regent's Park, and met her and her Manager, Mr. McLeod, for a final conversation. In view of what Mr. Walton had told me of her attitude on previous occasions, when she seems to have been fairly intractable and even defiant, she struck me very early in the conversation as being more alive to the real facts and to the patent disadvantages of a collision with public opinion in India than she had been before. I attribute this to the fact that she has had time to reflect on the considerations which Mr. Walton brought before her, and the improvement was therefore due to his skilful opening of the business with her.

In recapitulating the position I pointed out to her that, all other considerations apart, the Viceroy had, in causing her to be approached privately

(1)

before



before her arrangements were fixed, taken a step which was in her own interests and most considerate to her. He had felt bound to represent privately his own objections to the tour, and to ensure that she fully appreciated, not only the mischief to herself and the public interest generally of a conflict of opinion in which she might find herself acutely involved, but also that the Viceroy's Government is responsible for the maintenance of the law and in a wider sense for safeguarding the public interest. It was therefore necessary for her to realize that, if the tour, as contemplated, takes place, the Indian Government might possibly in certain circumstances be constrained to intervene. In any event she must understand that in no case could she receive any assurances from them which would tie their hands if intervention should unfortunately become necessary. I was purposely vague in dealing with the nature of the circumstances which might bring her into conflict with the authorities, but I hinted mainly at unedifying displays of discord, and left it to her to interpret for herself how far questions of public morals were concerned and how far questions of public order merely. She naturally considers herself a great, probably the greatest

(2) existing,

existing, authority on the former, and I should have been at a hopeless disadvantage if the argument had taken that direction. On the latter point she evidently defers to the views of Government.

She acquiesced very fairly in what I had said, and was evidently sensible of the consideration shown by the Viceroy. She at once said that, short of cancelling the visit to India altogether, she was prepared to take any steps which would ease the position. For example, she will not perform the Salome dance, which she says she never takes on tour. She said that on consideration she and her Manager felt that a scheme of semi-private performances could be arranged on the Stage Society model, with postal and Club circulars and a private subscription list, and with no displayed posters or money taken at the door. I then told her that in the Viceroy's view, this would be a wise and commendable step, and would tend to ease the situation. She replied that it meant a very great pecuniary sacrifice, and that, in order to cope adequately with the question of discrimination in the sale of tickets, her Manager might be in need of some sort of authoritative advice. I pointed out that this would be inconsistent with the Viceroy's declared

inability to take any share in the responsibility for her arrangements, since his hands must be kept perfectly free either under a scheme of private performances or under the scheme originally contemplated. In order that there might be no misunderstanding on this point I subsequently sent her the letter of which a copy is attached. This point being disposed of, she was quite ready to agree that the mere fact of conducting the performances on semi-private lines would immensely reduce the chances of widespread public criticism.

At this point something was said as to local variations of public opinion in India. On my mentioning the special importance of Calcutta, she voluntarily suggested the omission of Calcutta from her itinerary. She authorised me to say that she would cancel the visit to Calcutta, unless after arrival in India she was expressly invited by a suitable body of the Calcutta public to give a private performance there. I told her that I felt sure that the Viceroy and you would regard the cancellation of the Calcutta visit as a wise step. I also gave her a strong hint of a personal kind that she would be well advised not to go to Delhi, but I cannot feel sure that she will act on it.

The foregoing exhausts the topics mentioned except for two points relating less to actual business than to her amour propre. In the first place she said that she is accustomed to a social position of some standing, to Command performances and so forth. Mr. Walton immediately pointed out that in the peculiar circumstances the Viceroy's patronage could hardly be looked for, and that the manner in which she is received socially is one of the risks incidental to her going at all. She understood this, but without, I think, at all realising how very unpleasant her social position may very probably prove to be. She then proceeded to her second point, which has a financial as well as a personal side. She feels some apprehension that her appearances might be to some extent boycotted by the official world in deference to private pressure by superior authority, and she would like to feel that if she goes out under the semi-private arrangement, which entails much sacrifice, she will be getting a fair run for her money. I said that in this matter as in the other I could give no assurances, but that I would report her observations to you.

She then thanked us in a manner which was evidently sincere for the way in which you and the Viceroy have dealt with the matter, and we left.

Copy.

India Office, S.W.

27 September, 1913.

Dear Miss Allan,

I stated in the course of the interview you were good enough to give me this afternoon that, while the Viceroy, for the reasons that I gave, maintains his view that the best solution would have been the cancellation of your Indian tour, he is strongly of opinion that the adoption of some method of quasi-private performances such as we discussed, would be commendable and wise and would greatly tend to ease the possible difficulties of the situation. I also said, and I think it best to write now in order to avoid all chance of misunderstanding, that while he thinks the suggestion of great practical value, he must leave entirely in your hands the manner of carrying it out, and cannot accept any responsibility either for himself or his Government, which would tie his hands either in your own or future similar cases.

(Sd) F.H.Lucas.

TELEPHONE, MAYFAIR 1108
CABLE, NERVELDENE LONDON

WEST WING.

OUTER CIRCLE.

REGENT'S PARK, N.W.

Sept 30th - 1913

Frank Lucas Esq.

Dear Sir

I have duly received your letter of the 27th inst., and in the meantime have also received a very large number of press cuttings from which it is quite obvious that in consequence of my having refrained from making any communication to the Press, in deference to the wishes expressed by Mr Walton, that a decidedly erroneous impression has been conveyed with regard to my proposed programme

30 Sept 1913

(2)

~~in~~ India.

It is stated everywhere that a Manager of a Music Hall in Bombay has been warned that Salome will not be permitted. As I have all along told you, I never had the

~~slightest intention of going to the Vision of Salome in India, neither any intention of appearing at Music Halls.~~

I see from the press cuttings one of which I enclose you, ~~copy~~ that Mrs. Roshandras states that she met with nothing but success during her recent tour, and she as much as this dancer included in her programme dances similar to those made famous by me - Spring Song - Valse Caprice.

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(3)

Peer Gynt Suite etc etc - which
as you already know are
soldly what - I intend interpreting
I cannot possibly reconcile
myself to the fact that it
would be undesirable for
me to appear in these
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apparently she has met
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contemplates returning!
You will readily see that the great
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dances which I contemplate doing
met with great success & no opposition
from either the government of India
or local authorities when given
by someone else must do me
an irreparable amount of harm
if I fall in with your wishes &
refrain from coming to India.

(4) 30 Sept 1930

Mr Edwards, the Police Commissioner of Bombay is good enough to write me that he has personally witnessed my dances and found my work most artistic. This being so I cannot possibly understand why another artist giving similar if not the same dances should be permitted to present her programme without any interference whatsoever in my enthusiastically received whilst I contemplate doing

30 Sept 1930

(5)

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(6)

was undesirable that an English woman should interpret the music of the Masters by gesture, but now that it is established that a white woman has already done this with great success + approval. The Viceroys will surely not me to further persuade me to forget my appearances in Judge's Subscriptions here.

As I told you in my letter of the 23rd inst. I have entered into contracts involving me in liabilities of over £200 per week for a lengthy period and in addition I feel that my reputation is being seriously injured,

To Frank Lucas Esq.

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why let me have an
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my letter of the 23rd inst.
the same time inform me
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roy of India can object to
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The selfsame dances
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To Frank Lucas Esq.

7
Sept
1913

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