The Manager's Letter.

Cape Town,
Sept. 18th.

Dear Vic. Audience,

I am trying to write a few notes that will give you some idea of what I have been doing this summer —in the pauses of a delightful concert by the Cape Town orchestra; but I fear you may find them disjointed; not only have I had a large number of public meetings to attend, and social engagements which I could not neglect, but there have also been innumerable letters and visits from old friends and old members of the Vic. audience which have taken up all my spare time.

When I was told that the alteration to the stage would take four months I decided to have the long holiday promised me after the war and visit South Africa, that wonderful land where I spent seven years of my girlhood. An old Zulu servant said when he placed a Kaffir bangle round my wrist, "Once this has encircled your arm it will encirle your heart for ever." Another native saying is, "Once you drink of the waters of Africa you long for them all your life." Certainly in my case I have proved this. I have two charming young nieces and a clever nephew and a dear sister in this sunny land (many of the audience may remember Ethel Dunning, who used to help with the dancing here: and Frank Dunning, her husband), and though the standard of education in South Africa is high, and there are thriving universities at the Cape, Maritzburg, Johannesburg and Pretoria, yet for thirteen years there has been no opera company there and the occasional Shakespeare companies have mostly been on the "star" system. Moscovitch had lately drawn great houses for "The Merchant of Venice," but it was called by the majority a one-man show, an all round company is a very rare occurrence. The Univeristy and municipal authorities are keen on a visit from our companies to their country; Mr. Seals Wood, Lever Bros.' representative in Johannesburg, has promised to get a committee together to raise the necessary guarantee and to continue negotiations with the African Theatre Trust, who assure us they will gladly arrange for the Vic. companies if certain of support; and the splendidly enthusiastic meetings I have had make me very sanguine that this will be forthcoming. Four days before arriving at Cape Town I had three cables—my first marconigrams thrilled me—the first from the Archbishop asking me to stay at Bishopscourt while the boat was in dock; one from the Owl Club and Repertory Players asking me to lunch with them, and the third from Mr. G. B. Kipp, Headmaster of Sacks School, and brother-in-law of an Old Vic. enthusiast, Mabel Swansbourne, who had not only travelled over a thousand miles to meet my boat in the early hours of a cold winter's morning but, as Lady Warden of the Women's Hostel of the Witwatersrand University, did good work in helping to organise Johannesburg meetings and practically acted as my private secretary, or I should have been snowed under by the letters received during this visit. Mr. Kipps arrived with his motor directly we were allowed to land, also Leonard Rayne, an actor loved throughout the country, and his charming wife, Freda Godfrey, offered to motor me around. I had a delightful lunch with "the Owls." Dr. Viljoen, Superintendent of Education, was in the chair, Mrs. Kipps, who had arranged a dinner party to include several of the University professors and their wives managed to 'phone them and get them for tea, and a really helpful talk followed, Professor Bell offering to train an opera chorus, and Professor Clarke, understudies and walks-on for the Shakespeare plays. Dr. Barrow Dowling, the cathedral organist, also offered to get voices to help the Opera Chorus.

The Archbishop then called for me and motored to Bishopscourt, a beautiful old Dutch house. The guests at dinner included Sir James Rose Innes, whom I last met when he came to the Rand to represent the British Government at the time of the Jameson Raid. I left for Durban next day, where my sister and her family awaited me.

On July 15th, I addressed a big afternoon meeting in the Mayor's Parlour, under the auspices of the Natal Teachers' Society. (I told everyone throughout my tour that they must please not take my speeches as a sample of Old Vic. oratory, where we aim at the

highest and most beautiful in speech!) Here I had an exciting meeting, for our old acquaintance, Lyell Tayler, once of Brighton but now head of the Durban Municipal Orchestra, after welcoming me and praising the Vic.'s work, suddenly turned round and said he hoped that the Shakespeare Company would come, but that if opera came to Natal, he would bring it! declaring that Vic. opera was "not up to the standard South Africa should have"—we fought a duel then and there, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Several members of his orchestra were old members of ours and are still full of love for Charles Corri and the Vic., and look forward to our visit.

The next day I addressed a crowded meeting organised by the Durban Library Groups in the Art Gallery of the Town Hall. Dr. Campbell (whose son, Roy Campbell, has just published "The Flaming Terrapin" and other verses, and was a regular patron of the Vic.'s pit, took the chair. He is one of the leading doctors and a sincere patron of the arts in Durban; incidentally he saved my life when I caught enteric there at the age of 17. Their Excellencies Princess Alice and the Earl of Athlone were most kind and eager to help in every way, having enjoyed the Vic. with their children on several occasions.

Leaving Durban, my brother-in-law motored me through Zululand to their home in Dundee, N. Natal, the first day passing through sugar canes, banana plantations and orange groves. We had been over this ground by ox-waggon thirty odd years ago, plunging through the rivers which are now mostly bridged. The second day we crossed right over the mountains, and my sister and I left the family at home and started for our wonderful time at the Victoria Falls and the Motopas.

On my way up to Rhodesia I stayed in Johannesburg for the week-end and addressed the Rotary Club at lunch. Years ago I trekked to Johannesburg in a bullock waggon, and became the first music teacher and incidentally the second woman to ride a bicycle on the Rand.

We spent three days at Buluwayo and had some delightful meetings in schools. I spoke at 9 a.m. in the Boys' big hall, seating over 400 people, as well as in the Girls' school. I told them that if we could not get a theatre or a hall in which to play Shakespeare, we would have it on the Market Square. In the girls' school I played on a 900 guinea violin belonging to the sister who taught music; and at a dinner party that night there was the finest Steinway Grand.

Returning to my sister's home for ten days, I said I could speak but once, and the elder scholars of all the schools must assemble in the largest. The Convent had most space and was crowded out for an evening meeting of two hours. The Mayor took the chair, and a leading barrister, Pat O'Hea, who remembered my family well and paid a charming tribute to my parents and brother and sister as fine artists and delightful people, moved a vote of thanks. I had told them that if Sybil Thorndike should visit the country they must get her to give special performances of "Medea" and "The Trojan Women"; and being a Greek scholar Mr. O'Hea spoke in a most interesting way of Greek plays and aroused great enthusiasm.

From Dundee I returned to Johannesburg to stay with some old friends. An evening meeting was held at the Selborne Hall, the Administrator coming from Pretoria to take the chair, and having to motor back thirty miles that night, as there was no late train I was also asked to broadcast; and though I was nervous and had visions of the majority of listeners switching off immediately; they asked me two nights running; and my friends and relatives three and four and five hundred miles away wrote to tell me they had heard my voice well, and loved the address.

In Pretoria I stayed with Bishop Nevill Talbot and his sister, of the Talbot family that is so intimately connected with the life and growth of the Vic. We had a fine meeting in the great hall of the Girls' High School. Miss McWilliam, the Principal, was in the chair, and the Bishop moved a 'vote of thanks.' Everyone was tremendously keen. The Sunday after I thoroughly enjoyed a big drawing room meeting, at which many of the University folk were present, and where 50 people signed to support us. Committees are also being formed in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria to forward my scheme.

I have now returned to Cape Town and have been having a wonderful time here, with enthusiastic evening meetings at the Ronderbush High School. Miss Caroline Kemp, President of the Cape Divisional Teachers, was in the chair, supported by Sir Carruthers Beattie and Dr. Larne; and a committee next day at the University, Sir Carruthers Beattie in the chair, to plan how best to support the Vic. Company.

I am to broadcast from Cape Town on my last night in South Africa.

I am looking forward tremendously to seeing everyone at the Old Vic. again; and hope my time here will help me to do better work for you than ever.