



Panorama of Johannesburg.

HOME AND SOCIAL LIFE IN THE TRANSVAAL.

BY NEVILLE EDWARDS.

(ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR.)

VERY few girls like the Transvaal at first. The life is in many ways so very different; and, far from home and friends, they are apt to feel in their loneliness all the discomforts without appreciating any of the advantages. Certainly some of the discomforts are very palpable. Ladies who, over their cosy afternoon tea in England, dilate so fervently on the troubles they have with their servants, would in the Transvaal be ready to enshrine these same domestics in a halo of glory, could they only have them back, after being confronted with the problem of having a native "boy" to do the household work. As often as not the said "boy" is a raw native straight from his kraal, who does not know the difference between a saucer and a saucepan. He brings to you, with a face wreathed in smiles, your choicest bit of china smashed in ten thousand pieces, and requests "Inkosikaas" (chief-

tiness) "make good again." It is useless to scold him, for he does not understand a word you say.

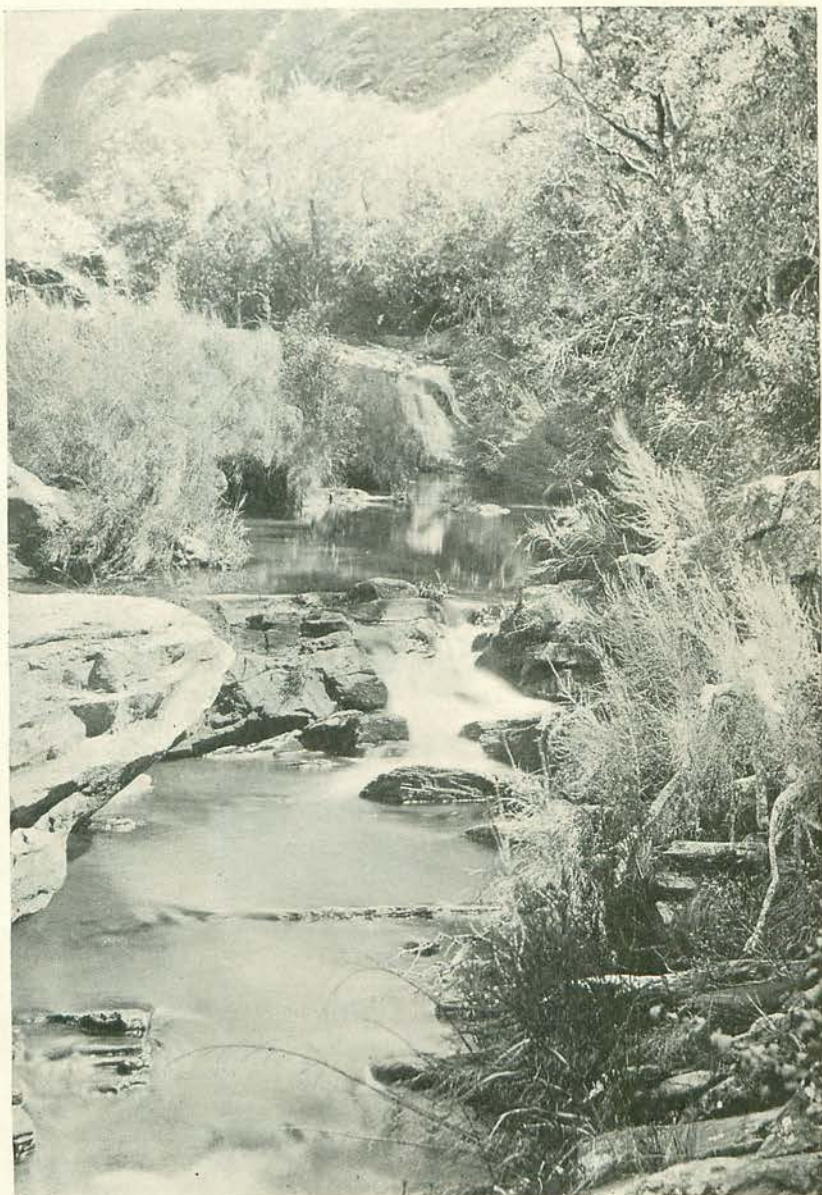
But, after all, the raw native has a lot of good points. It is wonderful how quickly he will pick up things. Before long he is really a very fair cook, and when once you have got accustomed to the idea of having a strapping black man as a housemaid, you find him by no means bad. He will dust, make the beds, and sweep the rooms almost as deftly as any white-capped Phyllis at home. Then he is generally more than passably honest. Perhaps he has a weakness for his master's whiskey-bottle, the contents of which—doubtless from the fear that its strength might injure the "baas"—he dilutes to its old level with water. Other things he seldom touches, unless he has been spoiled by contact with too much civilisation. Then vanity seizes him, and

he begins to realise the beauty of his snub nose and blubber lips. He develops into that truly appalling creature the "Kaffir masher"—the sort of native who, if he can write, tries to forge his master's name, or else he steals the money with which he buys the gorgeous ties, sashes, hat-bands, and flash watch-chains in which he swaggers down the streets of Johannesburg on Sunday afternoons.

All native servants possess the peculiarity of leaving you at a moment's notice, or rather without any notice at all. Some employers try to counteract this by keeping one or two months' wages in hand, but as often as not even this has no effect on the casual happy-go-lucky black. One morning you wake to find that all the "boys" have gone—that if you want any breakfast you must get it yourself.

The young housewife feels disgusted at this point, and calls hubby into consultation. Edwin demurs at first to the idea of

a girl from England; but on it being pointed out that if she is paid only as much as the Kaffir her wages would be considered handsome at home, he weakly gives way, and allows himself to be persuaded that all will be well. As to the cost of her journey out, the prospect of extra comfort for his young wife determines him to make the sacrifice. So arrangements are made, and at last, after



FAIRY GLEN.

(A favourite picnic spot near Johannesburg.)

long and anxious waiting, the new girl arrives. She seems a perfect treasure at first, and Angelina wonders why other people do not import domestics.

One day, however, Mrs. Brown-Jones calls. Mrs. Brown-Jones is a delightful woman, whose husband, Brown-Jones, "the well-known millionaire," made his pile three or four years ago. She herself is of Boer extraction, but tells Angelina she likes English people so much better. She is quite interested to hear Angelina has got such a treasure of a servant, and in her sympathetic way listens most kindly to her glowing eulogium of her qualities. When she leaves she speaks to the girl, and her mistress wonders what she can have to say to her. The next time she does the same, but the cold light of disagreeable truth only dawns upon Angelina when her "treasure" gives notice, and informs her that she is going to Mrs. Brown-Jones's, who has offered her eight pounds a month instead of four.

Another attempt to solve the domestic difficulty is by employing one of the Indian servants who find their way to the Transvaal in such numbers from Durban. The Indian is silent, quick, and smart; but he is as dirty in his habits as he is deferential in his manners. So English people, with their national love of cleanliness, generally revert, after many trials, to the Kaffir "boy," who, though far from a model, is, anyhow, clean by comparison.

Consequently it may be readily imagined that an English girl, until she gets to know people and the ways of the country, thinks

life under such conditions as these the reverse of pleasant. Afterwards her path is much smoother. Her acquaintances soon put her up to ways of overcoming or making the best of her difficulties. She soon catches some of the *insouciant* gaiety of her associates and disposition to look on the bright side of things, for which the bracing air and glorious sunshine are probably partly accountable, and enters more heartily into the round of society and gaieties which she finds awaiting her. In the summer there are garden- and tea-parties, race-meetings, polo-meetings, etc.; while in winter a girl who is fond of dancing need never be dull.

In Johannesburg especially it is perfectly extraordinary the quantity of dancing that some girls get through. What they are made of to stand five nights in a week, as not infrequently happens, it is hard to say, especially as in the Colonial fashion many dance through every item of the programmes.

There are no complaints that young men cannot be got to dance in the Transvaal. In a country where the fair sex are in a minority, the number of male wallflowers causes a tremendous demand for partners, so ladies' programmes are never empty. As a result of being in such demand, the innocent Colonial girl often acquires some artless little ways to insure getting her own choice of suitors for dances, instead of being at the mercy of the first man who asks her. Sometimes she accomplishes her purpose by filling her programme with fictitious initials, over which, if the applicant is one of her favourites, she tells him to write his name.



A KAFFIR HOUSEBOY.
(Man-of-all-work.)



THE LATE MR. BARNEY BARNATO'S HOUSE, JOHANNESBURG.

Another favourite dodge is to have two programmes—the one filled, the other only containing real engagements. By means of the filled one, if a man is not in her favour, she gives him ocular demonstration in the most charmingly straightforward manner: "So sorry, but you see my programme is quite full!" Such practices are of course not confined only to Johannesburg; but these little ways seem to be there carried to a very fine point indeed.

Dancing is enormously popular in every part of South Africa, with all classes of society. Indeed, it is safe to say that amongst the Colonial-born English there is scarcely one who is unable to dance. No matter how poor people may be, they seem to find money for subscriptions to balls. At Johannesburg, in 1890, when the cries of poverty and loss were to be heard on all sides, and again in 1898, when the shadow of the war was causing the deepest distress, and the stories in circulation would leave one to imagine that there was not another sixpence left in the town, hundreds of people were still to be found paying their half-guineas or guineas for subscriptions to the various dances.

The dresses, too, even in bad times—it is always a feast or a famine in South

Africa—would not lead one to imagine that there was any great amount of poverty connected with the owners. Some are turned out by the deft fingers of the fair wearers, but others are the latest creations of Bond Street. A South African lady visiting London was choosing the material for a walking-costume at a celebrated dressmaker's not long ago, when she espied a gorgeous garment just about to be packed. She asked its cost and where it was destined. "Ninety guineas, madam," came the answer. "It goes to a Mrs. L—, at Johannesburg." As the lady knew Mrs. L—, and that her husband was not so very well off, her astonishment can be imagined.

It is hardly surprising that new dresses are so much in demand when the number of dances is taken into consideration. There was a good story going the rounds of Johannesburg a few years ago of how a girl obtained fresh ones, which is particularly illustrative of the happy-go-lucky ways of certain sections of Transvaal society. She was a sweetly pretty girl, and when the man who had made a hundred pounds in a speculation the previous day asked her if he might send a ticket for the next dance, her

eyes sparkled with pleasure. "Oh, thank you, I should like it immensely!" she said. Then her face clouded over; she heaved a sigh, and continued, "Oh dear, but I'm afraid I can't!" "Why, what's the matter? Why on earth can't you?" excitedly interposed the enamoured one. "Well—er—you see—I hardly like to tell you——" "Oh yes, do! you must." "Well, I don't like to tell you, but if I must, I haven't got a dress fit to go in." "Oh, well, what does that matter? we can easily remedy that. You go to Madame

A——, and order one, and have it put down to me." "Oh no, I couldn't; and besides, I don't know about my mother and sisters, whether they've got dresses, either." "Oh, they'll surely be able to manage somehow," replied the man.

They did manage. The dance was a great success: the girl looked lovely in her new attire, and so did her two sisters and mother, for they all had new dresses. They proved to be at the expense of the enamoured speculator who had given *carte blanche*. The bill was

one hundred and twenty guineas! This trick was actually worked by the same girl on another man. It is hardly necessary to say that her family were pretty well tabooed when the story became known.

From the foregoing it will be seen there is no difficulty in spending money in Johannesburg if one is so inclined. "Have you shops out there?" is a question often asked of any one just returned. The ludicrousness of it to the person addressed is intense when he calls to memory Johannesburg's Pritchard Street on a



A TYPICAL TRANSVAAL PICNIC-PARTY.

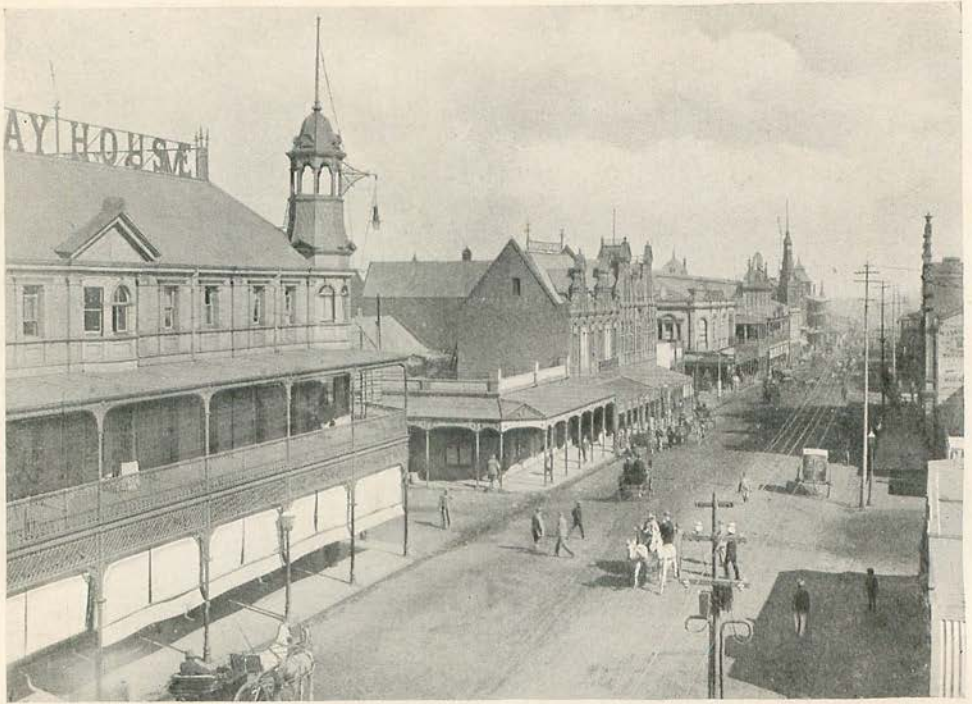


MR. FREDERICK ECKSTEIN'S HOUSE, SHOWING STOEP.

Saturday night blazing with electric light from end to end, and the temptingly displayed goods behind the huge plate-glass windows of the big emporiums. This street has been called "the Regent Street of South Africa"; and while one does not attempt to altogether justify its somewhat ambitious title, it can safely be said its shops compare more than favourably with those of provincial towns in England of far larger size. For instance, one shop fronts on to three streets, and has a public arcade running through it of more than one hundred and fifty feet in length; another is six storeys high; while a third attains to no less than one hundred and thirty feet, besides being fitted with lifts to the various departments, "cash railways," and all the up-to-date adjuncts of a great European store.

It is really wonderful what nice things are to be got in the Johannesburg shops. As a result, the furnishing of some of the better class houses is everything that could

be desired. Many of the drawing-rooms especially are very pretty, their owners, through going so much into society, taking hints from each other. In new countries, too, people are more ready to adopt the latest ideas, and consequently the depressing Philistine rooms so prevalent among the lower middle class in England are there the exception rather than the rule. That the houses do look nice internally is greatly to the credit of the Colonial housewives, especially in Johannesburg, where dust is so fearfully prevalent. Thanks to the trees which have grown up of late years, the dust is not quite so bad as it was. Many of the private houses are almost hidden from view by the trees which over-tower them. A good example of this is shown in the accompanying illustration, which gives a view of Mr. Frederick Eckstein's house. This is a beautiful residence, furnished and decorated with every taste, and might have been lifted bodily from some country estate in England.



PRITCHARD STREET, JOHANNESBURG.
(The Regent Street of the Transvaal.)

The dining-room especially is very handsome, with deep, cosy recesses on either side of the fireplace. The late Mr. Barney Barnato's house, on the other hand, has the appearance of somewhat gaudy magnificence.

Johannesburg might be described as a city of palaces and shanties. Next to the splendid house, or huge building devoted to commerce, there is perhaps the tiniest galvanised iron shanty. The "tin shanty," however, is not so bad as would at first sight appear. Houses of this description are lined with brick inside, and are invariably redeemed by the possession of the deep verandah, or stoep, as it is otherwise called, which is such a delightful feature of South African houses great and small. Very often passion-flowers are trained to grow up the verandah posts, and form a lovely veil of green, which shelters the occupants from the gaze of passers-by. It is here that the home life really centres. In a climate where one can sit out of doors nearly all the year round, and where the

light is so strong that there is no need to fear that the shade over the windows will unduly darken the rooms, it can be readily understood what an important part the verandah plays. Generally the drawing-room has French windows opening on to it, and here afternoon tea is usually served, while seldom an evening passes that there is not quite an assemblage on the stoep of friends who have dropped in to discuss the latest events of the day, the men smoking, and—softly be it spoken—sometimes the ladies also.

Picnicing is another great institution in the Transvaal. A common arrangement is for the ladies to provide the food and the gentlemen the drinkables and carriages. On page 167 is a photograph of a veritable fairy glen, which forms an ideal picnicing-ground. It is a perfectly idyllic spot—the water descending in cascades into a series of deep, unruffled pools that reflect back the glorious green of the overhanging trees, with the gaunt, red rocks as a background.