

# JOHANNESBURG IN 1908

THE GOLDEN CITY OF THE TRANSVAAL IN  
THE THROES OF HARD TIMES.

Special Correspondence.  
JOHANNESBURG, Oct. 1.—I write this in the golden capital of South Africa. Johannesburg rests on a reef out of which has been taken \$200,000,000 worth of the precious metal and which is supposed to have two or three billions left. There is more gold about it than about any other city of the world, and more is coming from it than from any other gold region. Johannesburg is the Denver of Africa, and, like our Denver, it is about a mile above the sea. Indeed, it is even higher than the great mining city on the edge of the Rockies. It is close to 6,000 feet, and if you could stretch a wire about the earth at its altitude, it would almost cut the top of Mount Washington.

## DENVER VS. JOHANNESBURG.

Denver and Johannesburg have many things in common. They are both on high plains and not far from black, semi-deserts. They are both in the hearts of the continents to which they belong. Denver is about half way across the United States. It is a little bit over the edge, perhaps, veering toward the west, which, after all, is the best part of our big country. Johannesburg is about half way between the Atlantic and Indian oceans, and it is further north of the Cape of Good Hope than Sandy Hook is east of Chicago. Its nearest port is Delagoa Bay on the Indian ocean, which is about 400 miles distant, and it can also be reached by railroad from Durban, which is a little more than 50 miles farther. Both cities are based upon gold, and are built by the mines. The territories which support Denver lie in the Rocky mountains at its back, extending a long distance to the north and south. Those which support Johannesburg are right under the city and, they run in a great narrow strip east and west. They consist of several veins, covering a distance of 120 miles. The best part of the whole has only a length of 50 miles, and it is right in the center of this that Johannesburg is situated. Some of the houses are built over land which has been honeycombed with tunnels and filled up again, after the gold has been taken out, for fear that the buildings might fall in. When one climbs to the roofs of the houses of this city he can see the smokestacks of the mines extending east and west almost as far as the eye can reach. There are little white mountains of tailings standing out upon the landscape in either direction, and these mountains come right to the city itself.

## FOUNDED BY MINERS.

Both cities were founded by miners. Denver was started in 1858, just a half-century ago. Johannesburg dates back only to 1886. The land about both cities was considered almost worthless until the mines were discovered. The ground upon which New York stands was once sold for a half-price of glass beads and brass buttons, the site of Melbourne was bought for a pair of old blankets and the foundation of all Chicago was offered for a pair of cowhide boots. In early days there was a 2,000-acre farm on the site of Johannesburg, and it was sold for a team of broken-down oxen. Today the land and buildings which stand on that farm are assessed at about a quarter of a million dollars, and from it goes out more than \$100,000,000 worth of gold every year. In January, 1908, two business lots, not far from where that farmer's hut stood, brought \$110,000, and it is only four years since the Standard Bank of South Africa purchased the stand upon which it has erected a building worth three-quarters of a million. A lot on Pritchard street sold for \$200,000 about nine years ago, and there are business locations here so valuable that one would have to cry out with bank notes to buy them. This is so now, notwithstanding that

times are hard and business is decidedly dull. And still Johannesburg is only about 21 years old. When our boys who are to cast their first votes at the coming presidential election were raw, red babies the country about here was a wilderness and a waste, covered with grass during a few months of the year, and a bleak and burned desert for the remainder. It was then in its beginning as a mining camp, and its most striking features were canvas tents, mud huts and ox wagons. The first lots were then selling for a few shillings apiece, and it was not until some time that buildings of tin and galvanized iron began to rise.

## THE JOHANNESBURG OF TODAY.

The Johannesburg of today is made of steel, stone and wood. It has many five and six-story structures, although the skyscrapers of Denver are absent. It is not as well built as Denver, but it is a magnificent city considering its source of supplies and that it is away off here in the wilds. The town has just about the same population as Denver. It numbers about 150,000 souls, but 60,000 of these are blacks made up of Kaffirs from all parts of South Africa.

Johannesburg is laid out somewhat like Denver. Its streets generally cross each other at right angles, and they run far out into the country. There are something like 300 miles of roadways and the town altogether has a municipal area of more than 80 square miles. There are town lots far out in the country and enough streets have been planned to accommodate the growth of the next 100 years.

Denver has as good a street car system as any city of its size in the world. Its electric lines cover every part of the municipality and reach far into the country beyond. Johannesburg has about the best car system of South Africa, and the lines belong to the municipality. I understand that they pay well and leave a big profit every year in the city treasury. The street cars are all double-deckers. There is a covered compartment on the roof, and, for a "ticket"—that is, 3 pence—you can go to any part of the city or its suburbs.

I do not know how many churches Denver has. The city is supposed to be wicked, but I venture there is no denomination in the United States which has not at least one house of God there. The same is true of this Baal-worshipping town of the Transvaal. It produces enough of the yellow metal to make a big herd of golden calves every year, but nevertheless it keeps the Sabbath and has no end of Protestant and Catholic churches. The English church will hold eleven hundred people and it cost over \$200,000 to build. There is also a large Jewish synagogue, about 30 free masonry lodges and some other semi-religious organizations.

As to amusements, these South African towns pay more attention to such things than we do in America. Johannesburg has athletic grounds which cover 30 acres, including fields for cricketing, bicycling and golfing. There is a lady's bicycle track and outside the city limits there is a race course, where races are periodically held throughout the year. At the summer and winter handicaps the prizes amount to \$12,000 or more, and there is a meeting each season, when the races last for three days. The town has a turf club and social clubs of various kinds. It has a recreation and concert hall which will hold 2,500. I think its citizens pay more attention to fun than we do. There is no business done after noon Saturday, and the people then go to the races and club grounds. The city has fairly good theaters. It has a public library, a university and excellent schools.

Johannesburg has, in proportion, a larger colored population than Wash-

How it Compares With Denver—A Town of Churches, Theaters, Race Tracks and Clubs—The Whites and the Blacks—No Place for Young Americans—High Prices and no Work—South Africa's Small Population.



Photographed for the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.  
THE MARKETPLACE AT JOHANNESBURG.

ington. It has 60,000 or 70,000 natives, made up of Kaffirs, Basutos and other negroes of this part of the world. The blacks are not allowed to vote, and they have little to do except as workers for the whites. They have far less rights than our negroes, although they dress and look much the same. The Kaffir here rides in a separate car, a little open trailer which is attached to the rear of the trains for his accommodation. In going along the streets the negroes must keep off the pavements and walk only on the edge of the roadway or in the middle of the streets. He has his own churches and schools, and the whites expect him to keep to them.

About the only municipal positions that the blacks have are as assistant policemen. They are dressed in uniforms, and carry clubs, which are more like shillings than our police clubs at home. The Kaffirs also act as jinrikisha men. They have little victoria-like two-wheel carriages, in which they pull about for 12 cents per mile, or 75 cents per hour. The jinrikisha men are mostly Zulus, and they are among the queerest natives I have yet seen. They dress their hair in all sorts of ways, making it stand out from their heads in great rolls or horns. Not a few of them have real cow-horns so fastened to their heads that they seem to grow

there, the roots of the horns being hidden in the wool. These men wear breeches which reach half way down the thigh, leaving the lower part of the legs and feet bare. They paint the bare portions with whitewash.

## THE UNEMPLOYED WHITES.

Of the 90,000 whites in Johannesburg about 60,000 are males and the remainder females. In other words, there are about 20,000 more men than women, and a large part of the former are bachelors who have come here to seek their fortunes. Many of these drifted in here at the time of the war and were soldiers in the Boer or English armies. When peace was declared the country was booming, and for awhile they found plenty to do. At that time Johannesburg was growing like a green bay tree. Many new buildings were going up, real estate values rose out of sight, and everything was planned on the basis of Johannesburg's becoming a second Chicago. The money paid in indemnities and for the repairs necessitated by the war brought thousands of pounds into circulation and the demand for labor far exceeded the supply. Mechanics were imported by the shipload, and wages rose. Carpenters got \$5 per day and other

mechanics proportionately high wages. Then the bottom fell out. It was found that the country was overpeopled, and that the towns were overbuilt. The new business blocks could not be rented, and the values of property fell. Houses worth \$75,000 four years ago can be bought for from \$25,000 to \$50,000 today, and rents have proportionately fallen. When the bottom burst thousands of men were thrown out of work, and there are thousands of mechanics in South Africa who are now a burden on the community.

## A WHITE MAN'S JOB.

It must be remembered that there is a prejudice here against the white man doing what is considered the black man's work. There are many whites who would be glad to go into the mines at about a dollar a day, which is the Kaffir's wage, but the trade unions and the people are against it. There are about six times as many blacks as whites in South Africa, and the whites feel that they must keep up their standing as the superior race in order to hold their own. So far the white men act largely as overseers. They do but little hard work, and, after they have been in the country but a short time,

they get the idea that hard work is degrading and turn all jobs of coarse manual labor over the Kaffirs. Some of the whites have said, I understand, that they will not labor for less than a living wage, and that amount is considered to be at least ten shillings or \$2.50 per day. So you have a lot of reduced gentlemen and half starving out here in this land, which is producing more gold and diamonds than any other part of the world.

## NO PLACE FOR AMERICANS.

I do not think this is a good place for Americans without capital. There are a large number of our skilled specialists, such as mining and mechanical engineers, who do well, but even such men should have a job contracted for before they start. This is no place to wait for a job. Indeed, I doubt if there is anywhere in the world where the bare necessities of existence cost so much. Houses which would rent for \$15 a month in any city of this size in the United States cost here from \$25 to \$50 a month; and bachelor livings—that is, board and lodging—run from \$35 to \$50 a month. Clothing is dearer than in our country, and as to such luxuries as drinks and cigars, the charges are enormous. Any kind of a bottle of ginger ale costs 25 cents, and at the better restaurants the price of a Scotch highball is a half dollar. I have paid 25 cents for a small glass of mineral water and 37 cents for a glass of lemonade.

The rates at the Carlton hotel, where I am stopping, are about the same as those of the best hotels of New York, and it seems to me that the face of Queen Victoria on the golden sovereign, the coin which is universally used here, turns pale whenever I look at it and order a meal. I suppose the old lady knows she is going to leave me.

## LIKE TANTALUS.

Indeed, the situation of these people makes me think of Tantalus, who was condemned to stand up to his chin in water under a low-hanging tree and see fruit and water retreating every time he sought to satisfy his hunger and thirst, or of the poor little boy whose face is pressed against the glass of the candy store windows as he hungrily eyes the sweetmeats within. Johannesburg is surrounded by gold, bedded on gold, with gold extending thirty miles on each side of it. It is pouring out of these far-away mountains odd millions of gold dollars every twelve months, and for the past ten years it has been flooding the globe. Nevertheless its people are poor, and the most of the treasures they dig from their soil go to the nabobs of England and the stock companies of Europe. It is somewhat like Ireland, a country of absentee landlords, and its people are the white and black slaves of these far-away millionaires. In addition to this the country is cursed by the cheap native and Chinese labor supply. It would be far better off if it turned out less gold and diamonds at a high wage rate and the wages were spent at home.

## SOUTH AFRICA IN DEBT.

As a result of this boom and its collapse the South Africans are deeply in debt. Both farms and business blocks are plastered with mortgages and interest rates are comparatively high. The people are optimistic, and they have all the push of the pioneers in a fast developing country. They overestimated everything at the time of the war and branched out on credit. During the fight with the Boers, money flowed like water. England's purse strings were opened and a gold-on-shower rained down on the Transvaal. New institutions of all kinds were created. Expenses were enormously increased and everything was planned as though the war appropriations and the large war population were to continue forever. This was

not confined to Johannesburg, but the boom extended to Cape Town, Durban and all the towns of South Africa. Durban put up buildings to accommodate 100,000 people and it has now less than 50,000, while this town could take care of 50,000 more without overfilling its houses.

Indeed, South Africa is much bigger in the eyes of the world than it is in reality. The whole country has not as many white people as Philadelphia, and in this I might include all the whites who live south of the equator. Nevertheless, there are banks here with capitals of millions. There are several thousand miles of railroad and there are a half dozen cities with great ports and costly improvements. The wonder is not that South Africa is hard up. It is really wonder that it is at all.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

## PUTS DUTY BEFORE LOVE. SHOOT DEAREST FRIEND

(Continued from page thirteen.)

the slip of paper, implying that all information was there. Serge glanced at it and frowned, because his duty had become so hard. He knew the real Madame Gadomska; she would have answered questions readily.

"You can assure me, on your word of honor, that you and the lady described here are one and the same," he asked at length. There was a long silence. Broken at length by Jan, who tore off his hat and veil with a cry of despair. "It has to be," he exclaimed. "Oh! Serge, how hard our luck is."

Serge Alexandrovitch looked up, and down the darkening road. His men stood near; behind them was a ditch, the sort of ditch a man might fall back into when he is shot. "Why, in God's name, did you take off your glove?" he asked. "I have orders to—shoot—you—here—at—once." Breaking off, he turned from the carriage to hide his tears.

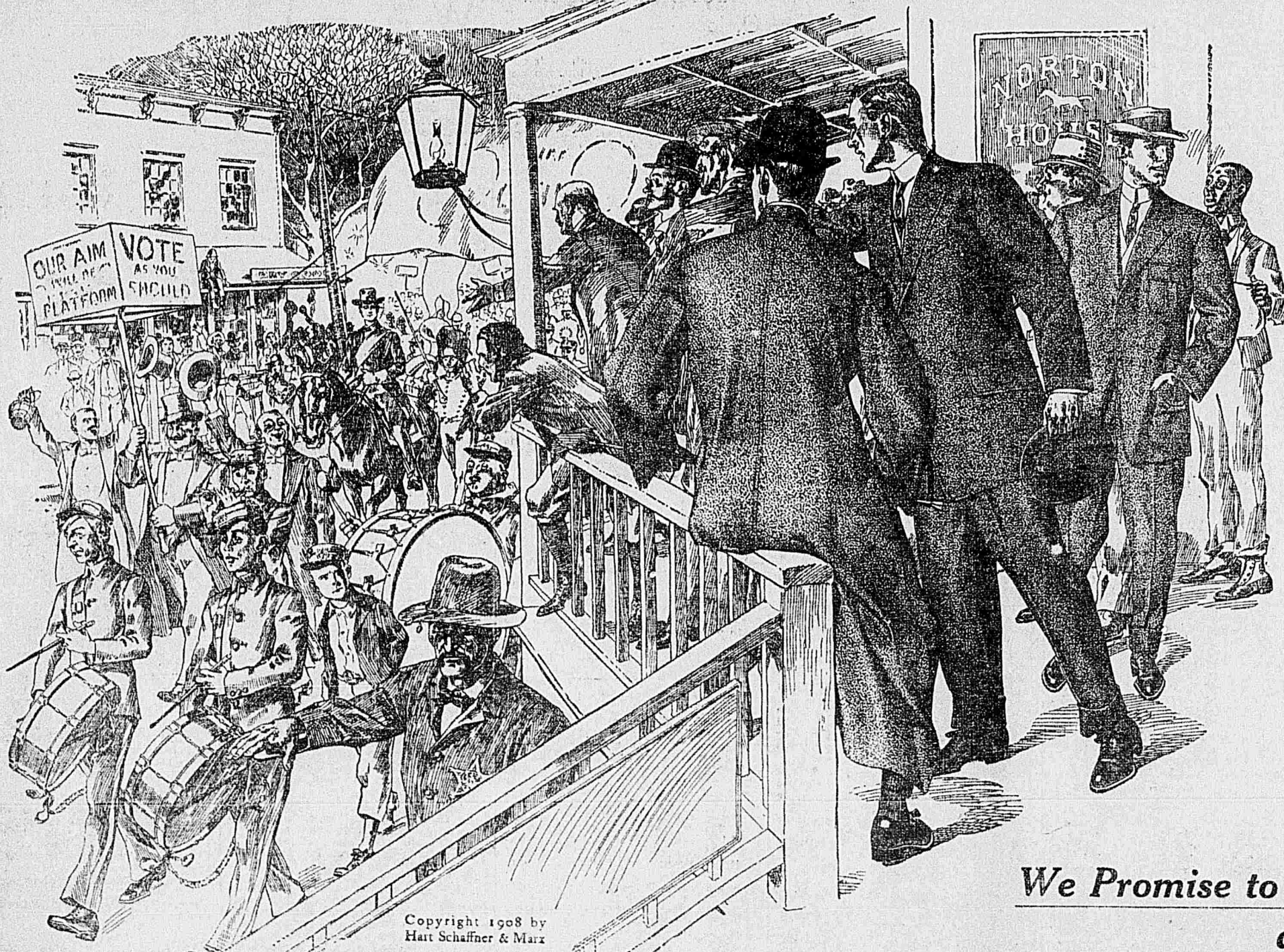
Jan was dumb for a moment. He had not thought of death as being so near. The dusty road and flat fields beyond suddenly seemed very fair, because they represented life. Then he stared at the ditch, the soldiers in their familiar uniforms, and his friend's back. He scarcely heard the driver's protestations; there was no train to be lost now. Suddenly he sprang from the carriage and hastily removing his disguise, went up to Serge Alexandrovitch.

"I am ready," he said simply. "Serge turned round and they embraced, after the manner of Slavs."

ALL TO EXECUTIONERS.  
"We must hurry," murmured one of the men, looking skyward. "It grows very dark. Jan turned to the carriage and returned with a small bag. It contained all his money, collected in haste to begin that new life beyond the frontier. Handing it to the man who had pointed out the need for haste, he said: "Take these and share them with your comrades. Only shoot straight and be quick."

He took his stand in front of the ditch. Serge drew up his men and bandaged Jan's eyes with the thick veil. Once more they took leave of each other, but in silence, with hands clasped. FRIEND'S ORDER TO FIRE.  
Even the old driver had ceased his lamentations and stood by the leaders' heads lest they should bolt. Then, as though suddenly afraid of the sight he should witness, he sprang to the box with the agility of youth and dashed with his horses down the road, leaving the men and the little pile of clothes in the dark behind him. With white set face, Serge Alexandrovitch gave the order to fire and 12 muskets rang out. Uttering a sharp cry Jan fell back into the ditch.

BEATRICE BASKERVILLE.



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