

OLD-TIME RAND PLEASURE RESORTS.

THE modern pleasure resort of the Rand is at best a dull place, and the restrictions of municipalities and licensing boards, together with the changed views, recently introduced, of public decorum, have converted it into a kind of gentle meeting-house social, where tea and cakes and ginger-pop are served out to promote "a feast of reason and a flow of soul," and where any extremes of fun and hilarity and health-giving but boisterousness of enjoyment are tabooed as eminently vulgar and unbecoming. Everybody who pays a visit to any of our latest fashionable resorts must be struck with the evidence of sober respectability observable in the holiday-makers, who, attired in their Sunday best, promenade the grounds, or lounge by the banks of the river or dam, or watch a billiard match, or

wind blew, or the dust flew, or the rain rained, Johannesburg, his wife and his family, sallied forth to visit his favourite site, and to enjoy, either for the whole day or the afternoon, a full relaxation from the troubles of business and the worries of the town. Cabs, carts, and vehicles of every description were in demand, and woe betide the poor unfortunate individual who expected to obtain a cab unless he had engaged it the previous day. In the early nineties there were no fixed fares, and cabbies could, and used to, charge what fares they pleased. But to the resorts nearer towns, such as Langlaagte, Auckland Park, Rosettenville, &c., the general charge was £2 or £2 10s. for the whole day—commencing at 11.30 a.m. and ending about 5.30 p.m.—and £1 for the half-day or portion of the half-day.



BOKSBURG LAKE.

walk about looking almost as uncomfortable as a person seeking pleasure can look. There is none of the life one expects to see, none of that vivacity which the change of air, of scenery, and of surroundings, and the pleasurable elements that ought to be present, would naturally excite. It is a tired, stiff, over-dressed, over-ennuied crowd that is met with, and except one knew that the place was yclept a "holiday resort," it would tax the imagination of most people to conceive it as such.

The Old Resorts.

There were many places to visit in the earlier times, but not all could be dignified by the term "pleasure resorts." Two or three, at least, would be better described as "health resorts," though even here there was always present that sense of freedom from restraint which, perhaps, next to fun and laughter, is the best doctor. Most of them were chiefly utilised on the Sunday, when, no matter how the

But cabby had his perquisites in addition, and ordinary and liquid refreshments were always served out to him, free. Moreover, he did not feel he was a Johannesburger if he did not take his Sunday outing with the rest. The chief resorts were:—(1) the Half-way House to Pretoria, reached by the old-fashioned stage-coach; (2) Orange Grove; (3) Langlaagte; (4) Booysens; (5) Auckland Park; (6) Florida; (7) Rosettenville; (8) Sans Souci; (9) later, Rosherville; (10) Boksburg. It was a sight worth seeing to stand on any of the roads leading to one of the places mentioned. Vehicles, filled with happy and joyous passengers, raced along in reckless fashion, regardless of the bad condition of most of the roads. Shouts, cracks of whips, snatches of songs, and the expostulatory language of the Jehus intermingled, and the dust was raised in great clouds. Pedestrians also were to be seen, especially in fine weather and on the shorter roads, and each outgoing

MEN OF THE TIMES.

reminded one strongly of the old-fashioned school picnics. Sometimes a few young bloods would indulge in carnival activities, blowing horns, braying, or making some hideous noise to show that they were alive and meant that other people should know the fact; but there never were any scenes of a disgraceful nature, and absolutely no rowdyism. In this respect, to venture on a comparison which may be odious, the earlier Randites were, as a body, not less mindful of the proprieties than the present population; but they were not restrained in their freedom of action either by Governmental (police) restrictions or by any unwritten social regulations or ideas of ultra-gentility. The Rand was then regarded as a mining camp, but differed from anything of the kind in that it possessed, as a whole, a refinement essentially the qualification of a modern prosperous city. True, there was a sprinkling of the rough element, but even that was opposed to the general ideas of rough camp life,

the Half-way House and Florida (Cutting's Hotel), bands, more or less skilled, rendered musical selections at all the rest; indeed, music and singing found the great attraction. It will be convenient here to divide them into two categories, viz., health resorts and pleasure resorts, but Florida and Boksburg may be classed in each, as they both had lakes and rowing-boats. The division will work out thus:—

Pleasure Resorts.—Langlaagte (Willow Grove Hotel), Rosettenville, Auckland Park, Sans Souci, Rosher-ville (later), Orange Grove.

Health Resorts.—Langlaagte (Sells Hotel), Florida, Boksburg, Half-way House, and Booysens.

Enough has been said to convey some faint idea of the kind of recreation adopted here in the infancy of the Rand, and nobody but will agree that it was rational, educative and health-giving. Some faddists there may be



WITPOORTJE VALLEY.

as depicted by Mark Twain, or as limned in the Australian and American illustrated journals. The people here were prosperous, and consequently happy and contented, and the Sunday resorts were little gold mines to the proprietors.

Similar general features could be traced in all of them. There were the hotel and bar, and the gardens where refreshments were served out. There was even a sameness in the charges for lunch, sandwiches, snacks, &c.; and this, by the bye, is a somewhat extraordinary fact, seeing that the visitors would have made no demur about paying any price that might have been asked. The last point of similarity was that no entrance fee was demanded. But there were many differences. For instance, Rosettenville, Auckland Park, Sans Souci (later), and Orange Grove, all gave open-air entertainments. At Florida and Langlaagte there were quoits and skittle alleys; Booysens was chiefly remarkable for its splendid flowers and plants. Excepting

who will find fault because entertainments were given on a Sunday, but upon this point opinions must differ. The writer ventures to think, however, that the very absence of Puritanism rendered those amusements innocuous. Certainly the people were happier and more contented than they would have been under a more restrictive application of the Sunday Observance Laws, and consequently, as happy and contented men are always good citizens, it is safe to affirm that if they did not take their pleasures sadly they did no very great wrong. The pleasure resorts were modelled, somewhat crudely, perhaps, but none the less modelled, on the principle of the Continental pleasure gardens. There may be a prejudice against this form of amusement, due to insularity of ideas, but the time is coming when the great flag of England will convey what it is meant to convey—freedom and liberty to all who live under it.