

# HAVE YOU SEEN OUR RAILWAY STATION?

By HEDLEY A. CHILVERS

**J**OHANNESBURG'S new £750,000 railway station will probably be opened in June or July by the Minister of Railways, the Hon. C. W. Malan. The opening will certainly mark a big achievement in the life of the city. For almost since the railway first linked the isolated Rand with the coast and other areas some forty years ago, the station buildings have been deemed a reproach by its citizens. Visitors to the premier city of the Union have reached it by way of a dusty Reef journey ending in a dingy station of corrugated iron.

The position was quite unworthy of the biggest gold city in the world. Yet, not until a big effort was made by the city's representatives in Parliament ten years ago, did the project for the building of a station worthy of Johannesburg take practical shape. Even then there were strong bodies of objectors. One held that Johannesburg would prove a short-lived town (a view, fortunately, not held to anything like the same extent as formerly), and that heavy expenditure on a railway station would be wasted; the second carried on the tradition of the Rev. Mr. Vor-



Eloff Street approach to Johannesburg's new station.

Pretoria, the mine dumps, Hermanus, and the backblocks, where life is vividly primitive and intensely African. He keeps his tones pure and bright, avoiding high lights. The patterning of his skies is beautiful.

These pictures greet the eye colourfully as one stands under the dome, the biggest of its kind in Africa south of the line. It has a 60-foot arch, the construction of which, in concrete and brick, is regarded justifiably as a feat in engineering. There are three main domes with vaulting on either side, and an impluvium open to the sky. Who designed the dome I know not, though I suspect that the open-air impluvium is an echo of Mr. Gordon Leith's studies in Rome and Pompeii many years ago.

Other admirable features of the concourse are a screen of cast concrete so finely made that it resembles lattice work; flooring of Rhodesian mahogany, shops and stalls, and around it all, the strikingly-designed booking, service and waiting rooms. Ten-thousand pounds would by no means cover the cost of the decorations of the dining-room alone.

Pillars of green marble weighing 16 tons in the rough have been turned by the contractors into great cylinders of burnished emerald, topped by Mr. Alfred Palmer's rich bronze caps. The doors of the dining-room will be of South African stinkwood—in pursuit of the idea of using every possible variety of South African wood, from mahogany and teak to iron-wood. As the station is sunk in deep foundations the dining-room must be lit mainly by secondary and artificial lighting.

The lounge bar is another brilliant apartment. It is lined with beautiful jazz tiles, estimated to cost from £6 to £9 per square yard. The vivid colours and eccentricity of the lines are, of course, deliberate, but it is questionable whether the convivial traveller may not be disposed to draw alarming conclusions from these walls! The tiles were made at Oliphantsfontein, near Pre-