

TEXT-BOOKS IN USE IN NATIVE SCHOOLS IN AFRICA

BY GEORGES HARDY

(See p. 145)

EFFORTS have been made in recent years to adapt school programmes in French Colonies to the needs and mentality of the Native. The question now arises: what should be taught and how? for the problem of colonial education includes the training of the master and the setting up of scholastic equipment. The present article deals chiefly with such equipment in French West African schools.

It is only of late years that text-books have been adapted to the school programme in French West Africa. Until 1912 books intended for French schools or schools in North Africa were used, both equally unsuitable as they contained matter which conveyed no meaning to the native child in French West Africa. A revolution in text-books led to the improvement of spelling-books, but the attempt was unnecessary, as the use of spelling-books and reading-charts are becoming a thing of the past in Europe. The teaching of reading nowadays includes the teaching of ideas, and lists of meaningless sounds do not serve that end. Combinations of vowel and consonant are taught right away, and the black-board is useful for combining sounds and forming words which convey a meaning to the pupil. A well-prepared reading-lesson is worth more than a text-book, and language is learnt by the sound of voices and by the connexion between pictures and ideas.

Readers of different standards are a necessary part of the equipment. Various books have been compiled, most of them of the three-standard series. The first standard, intended for beginners, contains short simple sentences, and words and familiar ideas. The second is for more advanced pupils and contains short stories. The third is intended for the highest standard in elementary education; it summarizes what the pupil already knows and deals with a variety of subjects.

As the Reader is not intended to impart knowledge, but merely to teach reading, it might be limited to one subject only. Some writers have combined in a single book all the subjects referred to, it is called 'the native school text-book', but it is too theoretical to be of great use in class.

Small manuals dealing with one subject only have also been written. These are cheap and handy, but it is doubtful whether there is any great need for them; simple text-books on various subjects should be provided, but merely as accessories, not to take the place of oral teaching.

The question of handbooks for teachers is as important as that of text-books for pupils. A book has been compiled containing instructions concerning methods of teaching, types of lessons and the subject-matter of the lesson. MM. Pérés and Sonolet have written a *Livre du Maître Africain*, which is a

collection of all the subjects taught. It is an excellent idea, but is open to the same objection as the single text-book, to which reference has already been made. Special handbooks have also been compiled giving lessons for the whole school-year.

Every one is agreed that handbooks adapted to local requirements are necessary. Schoolmasters in French West Africa are equipped with handbooks on tropical agriculture, geography, history, drawing, and with collections of songs.

'Language charts' are one of the most necessary aids to teaching, they are excellent from many points of view, but unfortunately they are practically non-existent. Various plans have been set on foot in French West Africa, but owing to the question of expense nothing has come of them. Such charts should be adapted to the *milieu* in which they will be used, as their great aim is to help the pupil to understand his surroundings. Charts should be boldly planned, correctly drawn and should be expressive. Life and action should be introduced.

Finally there is the question of libraries, and here little has been done. Attempts have been made to fill school libraries with suitable books, but native post-school literature does not exist. The problem will not brook delay. Native life, popular science, and folk-lore offer plenty of material, but writers with the necessary vision and knowledge are scarce.

With regard to the language selected the equipment needed would probably be much the same whether the subject was to be taught in a native or a European tongue.

Once this question of principle is settled, a decision must be reached as to what equipment is needed immediately and what can wait. It is important that this problem be solved successfully, otherwise schoolmasters will fail in their mission and probably increase, rather than lessen, the endemic long-windedness of the backward races.

L'INFLUENCE DU ROYAUME DU CONGO SUR L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE

PAR E. TORDAY

(Voir p. 157)

LE merveilleux accroissement de nos connaissances dans le domaine de l'ethnologie africaine au cours du dernier quart de siècle a naturellement soulevé un certain nombre de problèmes qui continueront à nous intriguer jusqu'à ce que des précisions nouvelles aient complété ce que nous savons déjà de l'histoire de ce continent. C'est une recherche difficile à réaliser, car les indigènes n'ont jamais tenu compte du temps, mais elle n'est pas sans espoir.

Les remarquables travaux du R.P. Van Wing sur les Bakongo ont attiré l'attention des Africanistes sur l'existence et l'importance des vieux chants