

## NATIVE EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA

I FEAR that some readers of this JOURNAL may consider me guilty of what the late Lord Fisher called "damnable reiteration" in reverting to this subject; but I am impelled to do so for two reasons: Firstly, because of the paramount importance of the subject, since every serious student of African problems knows that unless we grapple with education we will never make anything of Africa; secondly, because so far I have failed to find a real *policy* clearly defined by anyone; and in the outlines which have been suggested in a sketchy manner the tendency appears to me to be to insist on advanced twentieth century methods, which are not so suited to Africa as, say, those in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe.

I. *The Necessity for Education.*—I propose, in this article, to take this for granted, as it is not seriously in dispute; the necessity being admitted by at least ninety per cent. of those entitled to a hearing. The necessity is admitted, roughly speaking, for two reasons: (i.) our duty to the natives, for whose well-being we have assumed responsibility; and (ii.) because the native is the chief asset which Africa possesses, wherefore, unless we develop the asset, we will accomplish very little in the way of regeneration.

In its broadest sense, all contact with Europeans educates natives. Much of this "education" is bad; all of it is aimless. To be content with getting natives to work on mines, on farms, on railway construction, carrying loads—in other words, earning money and spending it in the stores—is not only a blind alley educationally, but it leads to the deterioration of the natives. Put bluntly, we are not only leaving each generation as badly off as the previous one, but *worse off*. Only by sane education can we remedy this—and by education we must remedy it. After twenty years' close contact with the natives, I am sure that the alternative to right education is ever-growing unrest.

II. *Nature of the Education.*—Education in this sense may be divided into three branches. (i.) Religious and moral.

(ii.) Clerical—from the A.B.C. to higher education. (iii.) Industrial and agricultural. I believe that the first should be left to the Church (the Missions), and the second and third become the affair of the State; but they should go side by side with the first. The Missions should continue to do the work which they are doing in different centres, but, in addition to this, when the State opens a training school, a Mission should be asked to open a branch close by, or put in a resident chaplain and staff; so that the pupils, while at school, will always have moral and religious help and guidance close at hand. We will do no good in Africa if we try to build up a religionless-educated class; and as the pupils will be taken at an impressionable age, this joint instruction will have a great effect on their characters, as well as on their work.

As regards the State branches of education, I unhesitatingly put the industrial side first; and this priority should, in my opinion, always be borne in mind. At one State school—the only one in a particular protectorate—the proportion of teachers, both white and black, is three to one in favour of the clerical as against the industrial side. This should be reversed. I do not say that all clerical teaching, or higher education, is bad for natives. On the contrary, not only is there an obvious opening for a certain number of trained clerks, etc., but the door should always be open for those with a special aptitude for higher mental training, whose value to the continent and to their fellows will be great in the future. Nevertheless, to create, thoughtlessly, an army of clerks will tend to lead to a blind alley as surely as will the casual employment of a purely muscular nature referred to above. It may be objected that the native *wants* clerical teaching, and *does not want* industrial training. Granted: I know it. I know it as well as any critic can know it, and I do not care if it be so. As a child I *wanted* to be a tram-conductor and to drive a butcher's cart, but I was not allowed to have my way. Had I been allowed to do as I wanted, I could, justly, have blamed my parents when I was older. Similarly, if we allow a large number of natives, just because they want it, to develop into an army of unwanted clerks, they will, with equal reason, turn and rend us—their guardians—later on, for training them to a profession at which, in such numbers, they will be unemployables.

Not only will they turn and curse us, but they will become agitators and will use their learning to stir up discontent.

If the natives want clerical education, they must have it, at first, as a supplement to industrial training. (Later, those who show special aptitude can be transferred to the clerical side.) If they will not come in for a maximum of industrial training with a minimum of clerical instruction, I consider that some compulsion should be used. I might add that, while not advocating compulsory labour, owing to the dangers inherent in such a system, it is, nevertheless, a fact that—granted good conditions—many of the Central African natives prefer compulsory to voluntary work. Many of us knew this years ago, but directing compulsory labour for war work for four years emphasised it. Reverting to education, I believe enough volunteers will be forthcoming without any difficulty; but, if not, I cannot see that that should prove an obstacle. To make a fetish of voluntarism in this way is merely paying lip-service to freedom. If one carries it too far, one is not giving them freedom, but perpetuating backwardness and the helotry of unskilled manual labour. A little compulsion, wisely applied, will lead toward freedom and away from slavery.

III. *Apprenticeship*.—The education of the Central African native will never succeed if the pupils can come and go when they like. An English schoolboy cannot do so: no more should an African. If we wanted a big army in Central Africa, we could get it easily, but we would naturally insist on enlistment for three, or more, years, with re-engagements. If this is right for a fighting army, why not for an industrial army—for an army of useful citizens? Incidentally, the fighting races need attention first. Under tribal rule their young men had to serve their time in the "army": it was their occupation between certain years, and their duty to the State (the tribe). As we are not going to keep more troops than are needed for police work, how are we to replace this occupation, this State duty—and its educative discipline—if we do not organise a system of useful education?

A certain number of youths should be taken yearly as apprentices for three years: given good instruction in simple trades and crafts, some elementary clerical work—not for-

getting religious and moral training alongside. At the end of three years there would be re-engagements according to the aptitude of the pupils. After the first spell the pupils could be allowed to marry, and have their wives and families with them (increasing scope for the mission adjoining the school). Tribalism in Africa cannot survive for ever in contact with the individualism of the governing races. We simply must start something now to take its place when it totters, or Africa will fall with it. A system of apprenticeship and guilds will probably do as well as anything to replace it, or to buttress it during the trying intermediate stages in the evolution of the African native. It is, I hope, hardly necessary to emphasise now—to readers of this journal, at any rate—the fact that this evolution is to-day taking place at a rate unparalleled in history; and that, therefore, it needs our most serious and sustained attention.

And when the pupils go out into the world? That is, in detail, beyond the scope of this article; but, put briefly, there will be two careers open to them, both of which will help the material development of the continent: (i.) As artisans in the trade they have learned, or as skilled assistants on European farms; or (ii.) as instructors in village schools in their own tribal area, and as advanced farmers "on their own." In either case we should have men with the main ideas of a Christian life; ideas of decent living; the power to do good work and earn a decent wage—in a word, decent, self-respecting citizens, instead of a mass of natives who, admirable as they are in many ways when in a state of pure savagery, often become degraded savages after indiscriminate and uncontrolled contact with European civilisation.

IV. *Village Teaching*.—This is, in many ways, more important than the apprenticeship and training schools outlined above, because to raise the African native, *en masse*, one must start at the bottom, in the village, kraal or *shamba*—the centre of tribal and family influence—and work upwards; not *vice versa*. I put the apprenticeship first, however, because one needs to train the teachers (who must always, while at school, be carefully taught to respect and obey those over them, so that on their return to village life they will respect and not despise or flout their chiefs and headmen). The Fifth Com-

mandment is not the least important of the Ten. Village instruction in the simpler arts and crafts can start at once, but it can never become a living force without a constant flow of instructed natives returning to their homes to teach, and showing—by their skill and success—the advantages of education. Need I add that, in teaching, discrimination should be used? Smelting and blacksmith's work should be taught to natives who live in a country with iron; cotton-spinning and weaving to those who live where cotton can be grown; ploughing, tanning, and saddlery to cattle-owning natives; joinery to those in timbered lands, and so on; while all could learn some methods of better building, such as *pisé*, and the rudiments of agriculture—to say nothing of simple sanitation, etc.

In a short time (as history counts time) we would transform Africa for good. At present we are doing very little, and what we are doing is, largely, not in the right direction.

V. *Selection of Teachers.*—This is most important. We all know that the teaching profession is very mixed at home. (Not only was I lucky when I was a boy in having very fine masters, whose influence I gladly acknowledge; but I have been tutor and schoolmaster, too, so I am in no way prejudiced against the profession.) Though many a teacher is really gifted and has a "call" for his (or her) work as true and as real as the best clergyman has for his; yet, unfortunately, there are many schoolmasters, governesses, etc., who only undertake teaching because they are unable to earn a living in any other way. This is fairly serious at home, but it is fatal in Africa. Experience shows that when once such an incompetent teacher settles in Africa he does not leave. He does not live in luxury, as some sneerers at missions make believe; but he does get a greater competence and freedom from real want, with less exertion, than he could get in any other way—and he does incalculable harm.

All teachers of natives, mission or State, should be licensed, as are medical men. If we do not allow unskilled men to minister to people's bodies, we should not allow the unskilled to minister to their minds. Before the licence is granted, the Government should satisfy itself that the applicant is of a good moral standard (a "straight" man and a clean liver); has qualifications for teaching; and—last but not least—has

self-control : in few professions is it more needed ! If, after a period, an examination of the teacher's pupils shows him to be unsuited for his work, his licence should not be renewed. It does not matter about the necessity for him to earn a living ; he must not be allowed to earn it at the expense of our African " wards " ; if he cannot teach them rightly, he must find some other means of sustaining life. A very large percentage of the missionary staffs in Africa would have no difficulty in obtaining and keeping their licences ; and their truly noble profession or calling would be all the better for the departure of the minority who are doing no good here. It would do the minority no harm either to quit the work for which they are unfitted.

If this is important in the mission schools, where one can generally take Christian ideals for granted, it is still more important in the State (secular) schools. The teacher's example must be in harmony with that of the missions adjoining (or of the resident chaplain and staff), which will be looking after the religious and moral welfare of their pupils ; and—if education is to be a success—all the teachers must be people who have a liking for teaching, and *can teach*.

" The world looks to Britain for a lead," " Let every baby born have a sporting chance," were two sayings of the Prince of Wales in 1919. Will Britain give a lead in Africa now, and let her wards have a sporting chance ? If so, will the Government give us a *policy* for education in Africa ; and, before choosing one, study the guild and apprenticeship system, and take the advice of those who are qualified by experience and study to give it ?

Africa has many workers who are anxious not to betray their trust ; but they can do little without a policy from those above them. If they fail the responsibility will not be theirs, but will be that of those at home—glibly calling themselves trustees—who will not move in this matter. Let Britain lay down a policy and grant the initial capital. Africa and Britain will produce the men to start it. Then " the native problem " will be on the road towards solution, and the regeneration of a continent will have begun.

AFRICANUS.