

Each of the four universities, Capetown, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, has a Department of African Studies, in which languages occupy a prominent part. The University of South Africa does not teach African languages, but conducts examinations in Bantu languages for a large number of external students. On the other hand, Fort Hare College provides for its African students instruction in a number of South African Bantu languages. This is particularly gratifying in that it shows an interest by African students in the scientific study of their own mother tongues.

South African universities are taking a distinguished part in African linguistics. Their main interest is naturally concentrated on Bantu languages, and in this field they are doing excellent work. Practically all South African languages are represented in the curricula: Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Pedi, Tswana, Venda, Thonga, Karanga, Bushman languages; and an introduction to the study of Hamitic and Sudanic languages is also offered. As in English and German universities, language study is always supplemented by the study of phonetics. The number of students who learn an African language for purely practical ends is probably larger in South African than in European universities, but the scientific contribution of South Africa to African linguistics is equally great and distinguished. This is the case as far as Bantu languages are concerned as well as Bushman languages and phonetics. The *Journal Bantu Studies*, which is published by the universities, is a repository of Africanistic knowledge and has met with general recognition.

‘*The Mother Tongue for African Readers.*’

In the *Journal of the Royal African Society* (January 1939), Canon Rowling makes an urgent appeal for more and better literature in African languages. He recognizes the fact, which has often been stressed in *Africa*, that a European language, however indispensable it is for the modern educated African, cannot in every sphere of life be fully substituted for his own mother tongue. ‘Africans may learn to write some European language extremely well, yet with little understanding of its real inner meaning, and often with no gain whatever to life or conduct. In many cases, to their own great loss, they learn to despise both their own language and their own people. . . . On this argument we base our plea for much fuller and wider use of the many rich languages which African pupils speak as their mother tongue. We submit that only by this means can we rightly make the truth a real part of them, and educate them in the fullest sense.’ Canon Rowling laments that so little is done to make a systematic and combined effort in the production of literature, that in most areas there is no plan laid down in advance for producing vernacular books, and that only in very few instances are special workers set apart for this work. He admits the difficulties in selecting the languages suitable for literature, in finding the authors and the

means for publication, but he is convinced that much more could be done in providing for this 'most urgent' need.

Such an appeal is timely. It is certainly not the first of its kind, but the subject in question is of such importance for the future of the African that it is pardonable to repeat it over and over again, for the optimist will never give up the hope that there may be some one who not only reads but also heeds the appeal. The progress of European languages cannot be stopped: it would be both futile and unjust to attempt it. But does the European language spoken by a small minority preclude the cultivation of the vernacular spoken by the overwhelming majority of the people? Is it wise for Education Departments to treat it as negligible or to give it only a half-hearted interest? If more is to be done, as Canon Rowling urges, the white man must take the lead, but his chief task will be to win over the African, most of all the educated African, whom too often our education has drawn away from the soul of his own people, and who therefore is no longer able to realize that what his own race has produced is not something to be despised. Herein lies the problem.

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PROFESSOR C. DARYLL FORDE, Ph.D., whose paper 'Government in Umor' appeared in the last number, held a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (not a Rockefeller Fellowship), and acknowledgements in connexion with his work are due to the Leverhulme Research Fellowships Committee and to the Nigerian Government.