

## NOTES AND NEWS

BY invitation of the Italian Government the Eighth Meeting of the Executive Council will be held in Rome on October 1st-3rd. The meeting will be presided over by the Rt. Hon. Lord Lugard, chairman of the Council, and the members will be entertained to an official luncheon. They will be received by His Holiness the Pope, and there will also be a reception at the Pontificio Museo Missionario-Etnologico.

The paper by Father Schmidt on the use of the vernacular in education which was written after a preliminary discussion at the last meeting of the Council and which appeared in *Africa*, vol. iii, No. 2, will be further considered. An account of the proceedings of the Council will be published in the next number.

The second edition of the Memorandum on the Practical Orthography of African Languages has now appeared, the first edition of 3,500 copies having been sold out more than six months ago. The new edition differs from the old in that, as a result of experience and discussion, single sounds and the problems of orthography connected with them are dealt with more fully, and also in that the number of these sounds is greater than in the first edition. Since publishing the first memorandum the Institute has had to settle, or help in settling, the alphabets of a considerable number of languages in South, East, and West Africa, and the new edition includes the symbols recommended for writing the new sounds in these languages. Consequently, also, the number of languages of which specimen texts are given is considerably increased.

In the writing of the more important, i.e. of the more frequently occurring sounds, no real alteration has been made, only as a general rule already existing orthographies have been taken into account, even more than in the first edition, in order to reduce as far as possible the changes necessary in any new orthography. The proposals are therefore as conservative as possible. The memorandum is consequently not a severely scientific system of script; it is, and is intended to be, rather a method combining what is generally accepted of the old system with the new in order to present practical phonetic proposals and general principles which will unify and simplify the writing of African languages, without necessitating fundamental changes in the scripts already existing, and which can serve as a basis for discussion when settling the alphabet of a language.

It is not the intention of the memorandum to present a complete orthography for every African language. That is, of course, impossible because sufficient information is not available in the case of many of the languages.

And even when the sounds of a language are known, it is essential to have the opinion of an expert on the particular language who can weigh up the different points and give a decision. In the memorandum special emphasis is laid on the necessity of co-operation with experts, or, what is even more satisfactory, with all who have a knowledge of the language.

The question of a uniform and simple method of writing African languages has aroused great interest in many parts of the continent and is to-day the subject of much discussion as a result, to some extent, of the publication of this memorandum. The second edition of the proposals of the Institute must be regarded from a very different point of view from the first tentative proposals. The new script is used to-day in a considerable number of African languages; books for use in schools and churches and for ordinary reading have appeared in it, and experience has been obtained in printing, reading, and writing the new script, and in its use on the typewriter. It is possible for every one to compare the new script with the old. It is suggested that the new script will not suffer by the comparison, and that any one who makes the comparison without prejudice will regard the new script as progress and that it will make its way further in Africa.

In addition to the former contributors, Professor Father W. Schmidt of Vienna and Professor B. Struck of Dresden have given assistance in the preparation of the second edition, and Professor Paul Passy of Paris has prepared the French translation.

This edition appears in English, French, and German, and can be obtained from the offices of the Institute or through any bookseller.

VERNACULAR PERIODICALS, No. 3. *Kristofa Senkekafu* (Christian Messenger), Twi, Gold Coast (information supplied by Mr. A. Jehle).

The first periodical in Twi was edited by I. G. Christaller, the great expert in this language. Its chief aim was to publish folk-lore texts, historical traditions, and similar elements of national history and culture. Owing to lack of interest on the part of the natives, however, it only existed for six years. In 1905 it was started afresh. This time the paper had a definitely Christian and missionary purpose. It was intended to help teachers and ministers in preparing sermons and school lessons, but it also gave general information about Christian work in other countries, news of the world, educational questions, and similar subjects. The *Messenger* soon became popular, and its circulation increased steadily. This led naturally to laying greater emphasis on questions of general interest, e.g. the education of girls and women, public law, political events, hygiene and sanitation, native industry and its improvement, morality, patriotism, historical and geographical matter, technical inventions; in short, anything leading to real progress and combatting evils such as alcoholism, polygamy, and so on. The natives were

encouraged to develop their indigenous industries, such as weaving, pottery, carving, preparing oil and soap, and to respect and cultivate their own language. Articles on folk-lore again found a place in the periodical: fables, proverbs, stories of the creation of the world, religious usages were recorded, the names of the days of the week and of the months were discussed and explained. Special articles reported on events in other parts of Africa, such as Livingstone's travels, the fidelity of his servants; also the lives of eminent Africans were described.

Of particular interest are the numerous and valuable contributions to the history of the Gold Coast. The life and happenings at the royal court of Kumase are mentioned again and again. The fighting in the period between 1826 and 1900 is described, many of the authors being eye-witnesses who fought in one of the armies. These records should be carefully studied by future historians of the Gold Coast, since they describe native aspects of the events, which ought not to be neglected.

Before the war the number of subscribers was about 1,200; the paper was actually read or at least heard by a considerably larger number of people, as the copies were passed from hand to hand and were also read aloud to people who had no school education.

When the journal ceased to appear during the war, numerous appeals were received asking for its re-publication, and a sum of money was even collected among the natives to buy a new printing-press. A fresh beginning was made by printing the *Messenger* in Europe, which has, of course, great disadvantages and can only be regarded as a temporary measure. Preparations are now being made for the provision of a printing-press, and within a short time it will, it is hoped, be possible to begin a new epoch in the publication of the journal, which has proved such a valuable asset in the development of the mental and spiritual life of the Twi-speaking peoples.

Dr. A. N. Tucker, the linguistic expert for the Sudan Government, has now been working for almost a year on the native languages of the southern Sudan. A large part of the time has been employed in helping the various missions to adapt the new alphabet to the needs of the languages. This work has often necessitated a round-table conference of those concerned, since some aspects of the Rejaf Conference Report are capable of more than one interpretation. Those who took part in such conferences are to be congratulated on the generous way in which they overcame differences of individuality, nationality, and creed, and were willing to sacrifice preconceived opinions for the sake of uniformity. At the present moment, although in Dinka and Nuer one or two points are still outstanding, there is nothing to hinder the translation (into all of the 'group' languages) and circulation (in typescript form) of the governmental school text-books, recently compiled by the two

inspectors of southern education. This bringing together of different nationalities and creeds for one single purpose has indirectly had a good effect in strengthening the friendly relations that already existed among the various missions.

The most pressing need of the Government, however, is the provision of grammars and dictionaries for the use of European officials, it being considered more beneficial for the native if the official can speak the vernacular than if both have to converse in 'pidgin' Arabic or through an interpreter. To this end, missionaries and other authorities on the languages are encouraged to write such books, and the Government gives financial aid towards their publication. Now that the spelling questions are more or less settled, Dr. Tucker's time will be fully occupied in helping those who need help to prepare these books for publication. Miss Huffman's Nuer-English vocabulary and the Rev. A. C. Gore's Zande grammar have already appeared independently. This year should see the publication of Miss Huffman's English-Nuer section, and the Rev. Father Spagnolo's Bari grammar; while a Shilluk dictionary, and grammars of Shilluk, Nuer, Dinka, and Latuko are already in various stages of advancement. Five years perhaps will see all resident southern officials speaking the language of their districts.

This language policy, combined with the Government's interest in anthropology, gives great hope for a closer understanding between white and black. The great difficulty is the formidable hotchpotch of languages and dialects to be found in the Southern Sudan. It is not uncommon for an individual travelling by motor-car to pass, in one day, through four or five communities speaking mutually unintelligible languages—not merely dialects.

The establishment of 'group' languages (see Rejaf Conference Report, p. 30) and their use in schools and for official purposes will in time overcome the difficulty of sub-dialects and small community languages. The main 'group' languages at present are: Shilluk (Upper Nile Province), Dinka and Nuer (Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal Provinces), Zande (Bahr el Ghazal and Western Mongalla Province), Bari (Central Mongalla Province), Latuko (Eastern Mongalla Province), with the less important additions of Kreich (Western Bahr el Ghazal), Madi and Acholi (South and South-East Mongalla Province).

The philologically minded will doubtless witness with regret the gradual decline of such interesting languages as Anywak (a Shilluk dialect resembling Acholi), Moru (akin to Madi), Dongotono and Lokoya (related to Latuko), and eventually, perhaps, even Latuko itself, before the advance of its 'half-brother' Bari.

Professor and Mrs. Melville J. Herskovits of North-Western University

will sail for Africa next January on an expedition to the West Coast to continue investigation into the problem of the African relationships of the New World negro. The trip, which is under the joint auspices of the Northwestern University and Columbia University, will take them to Nigeria, Dahomey, and the Gold Coast. The major portion of the time will be spent with one people in this region, in intensive study. The others will be visited to afford opportunities for comparison with the West Indian and Suriname negroes which were studied in the course of the first and second Northwestern University expeditions to Dutch Guiana.