

EDITORIAL NOTES

ONE of the outstanding educational problems in Africa at the present time is the production of good school text-books. The article which appeared in the first number of *Africa* has been reprinted in pamphlet form (Memorandum II), and can be obtained from the offices of the Institute at 6*d.* per copy. The question is further dealt with in the current number in the article by Georges Hardy (see p. 145), and we hope that discussion of the problem will be continued in future numbers by authors whose experience has been gained in actual practical work in Africa.

E. von Hornbostel, in his article on negro music which appeared in the previous issue, drew attention to the fact that the music of Africa is relatively little known; there is in fact real danger that we shall not even learn what it was. An earnest appeal is made to all those who live in Africa and are in a position to do so to help to save African music, at least for scientific purposes. Von Hornbostel himself shows that this can be done with little apparatus and without much difficulty. We give every possible support to this appeal and urge our readers to assist in recording native music whenever an opportunity presents itself. They would not only be doing a service to the cause of science, but it would open to them an intimate knowledge of what is a vital part of the inner life of the African.

It is needful, however, to emphasize the fact that such records are only of full value when the words of the songs are accurately reproduced so that they can be studied and published with the music. This cannot be done afterwards in Europe, but must be recorded on the spot with the assistance of a competent Native. The object will be best achieved if the European understands the language and can check the Native's version and translate his words into a European language. In various European centres large collections of records of African music exist, but when they are not accompanied by careful notes of the text their usefulness for purposes of study is much restricted.

Nor is music the only branch of African culture which is threatened with extinction. All the other branches are imperilled. In the article in the previous issue on 'Text-books for African Schools' the desirability of the inclusion of examples of native poetry in school text-books was urged. But to do that the poetry must be known; it is astonishing how little this is the case in large areas in Africa. It is difficult to understand how a European can live for years or even decades among a strange people and take upon himself to lead them from darkness into light without studying their inner life as

expressed in their poetry. And yet this is only too often the case. It is not sufficient to collect a few legends, poems, and traditional tales and then print them in a Reader. If adequate educational use is to be made of native poetry, the poetry must be studied and a proper survey of it made; only by this method is it possible to discover what is typical of a particular language area and what is most valuable. Only such material should primarily be used. It is difficult to think of a more delightful occupation than the preparation of a collection of legends, proverbs, songs, and traditional tales gathered in the language area in which one works. In this case also the text should be dictated by a Native in the vernacular and then written down. Only in this way does it become of documentary value. This is of particular importance in the case of less known languages, in which no texts or only a few exist; the number of such languages is greater than might be imagined. When such texts are carefully noted, supplied with a good translation and also with any linguistic notes which appear necessary, they are of real value for scientific purposes and their publication can always be secured.

There are very few collections of African poetry in European languages covering either a large part of Africa or the whole Continent. The following are the best known: C. Monteil, *Contes soudanais*; Bérenger-Férand, *Contes de la Sénégambie*; Zeltner, *Contes du Sénégal et du Niger*; Equilbecq, *Essai sur la littérature merveilleuse des Noirs suivi de Contes indigènes de l'Ouest Africain Français* (the four first mentioned were published in the *Collection de Contes et Chansons populaires*, Paris, Leroux); R. Basset, *Contes populaires d'Afrique*, Paris (contains also a good collection from older sources); M. Delafosse, *L'Âme Nègre*, Paris, 1922; C. Meinhof, *Die Dichtung der Afrikaner*, Berlin, 1911; C. Meinhof, *Afrikanische Märchen* (from the collection *Die Märchen der Weltliteratur*, Diederichs, Jena); L. Frobenius, *Atlantis, Volksmärchen und Volksdichtungen Afrikas*, Diederichs, Jena (In this comprehensive collection twelve volumes have so far appeared).

More important than the recording and collection of African music and poetry, for scientific use, is their preservation and cultivation among the Africans themselves. This is true of native art as a whole. Here is a great task in which the Institute is anxious to help so far as lies in its power. The question of how this can be done will be discussed on a future occasion. Here it must suffice to say that any information as to the experience of readers in Africa who have assisted in the cultivation of native music and art generally will be welcome. Any ideas or proposals will be gratefully received. To such communications as seem to us suitable, we shall be glad (with permission from the authors) to give publicity in *Africa*.