

dramatist will not suffer from lack of themes, his own store of folk-tales is more than sufficient, and for his themes he will in no way restrict himself to folk-stories. Moreover, African folk-lore in a European translation is a poor substitute for the original text and will not greatly inspire the poet, for it is printed paper instead of life-blood. Would a collection of Aesop's fables arouse enthusiasm in the European dramatist? Nor is a book on the history of drama from the earliest times what the African needs; probably few would read it, they would prefer to learn from life, from their environment and from the living traditions of their nation; they will also freely use subjects originating in foreign cultures, European or otherwise, which captivate their imagination.

More important than printed literature is personal encouragement. The young man who has dramatic inclinations will easily find a European friend, a teacher or missionary, to whom he can confide his plans. This affords opportunity for giving advice and help, and for removing difficulties. The European friend can also help in creating an interest in the production, in having it performed and possibly published. What the Europeans can do is to encourage talent and to sponsor native efforts; this will always be an individual matter; the less we try to force development or to assist it by artificial means, the better. If Africa is to have an indigenous dramatic art and not a European imitation of a lifeless bastard form, that art will have to grow slowly and find its own way.

Help for the African artist.

In *Listen* (vol. iv, no. 2) a story is told of a blacksmith in Sierra Leone who on his own initiative modernized and thereby revived the old art of making knives, common among the Mende, by inventing a clasp-knife and selling it for one penny. Since his knife is good and cheap and is provided with a convenient haft of polished camwood, he is finding plenty of work to do, 'for he is a craftsman whose mind is open to new ideas, but who yet trusts his own judgement in craftsmanship'.

This is one of the few cases where a native craft has found the necessary encouragement and is therefore able to survive. A second case may be seen on the opposite shore of Africa, in the harbour of Port Sudan; there the Government has opened a shop in which objects produced by native artists and producers of handicrafts may be purchased, and many travellers avail themselves of this opportunity. Could not the same be done in other African ports all round the Continent? The African artist is not yet extinct, but may be found in many a village. In schools the pupils are taught wood-carving, modelling in clay, weaving, leather-work, and similar accomplishments, and some who have particular skill continue these activities after they have left school. Thanks to the African's artistic gift, which is decidedly above that of the European average, almost all these productions have some-

thing artistic or some peculiar charm about them and are appreciated by many Europeans.

As soon as a boat comes into an African harbour, the decks are immediately crowded with Indian or Syrian traders. Could not a modest space be reserved for the African trader with his native objects and curios? There will always be travellers who want to buy them, but who are not able to do so because the goods are not offered. On the other hand, native art deserves every encouragement. There are many ways of doing this, one being the sales on boats. Education departments and shipping lines should see that this opportunity is made available; by doing so they would benefit both the African artist and the European traveller.

Vernacular Periodicals, No. 16. Mefoe.

This is a Journal published in Bulu by the American Presbyterian Mission.

In 1929 the *Mefoe* was revived and given its present form for the first time. Its former incarnations were struggles to combine news of the world and of the mission with the exposition of the Sunday School lessons. In this combined form it was subsidized by the Church and never attained sufficient volume of circulation to become self-supporting.

For some time prior to 1929 the Sunday School lessons were published without the news page. It was then decided to attempt two journals, one for the Sunday School lessons, and the other, to carry the name *Mefoe* (News), to be distinctively a news magazine.

To start it in this form it was again subsidized by the Church and disseminated by church employees and sold almost entirely by subscription. In this way it attained a circulation of about two thousand per month at a price of 25 centimes, and proved to its sponsors that its circulation could be increased by lowering its price and by improving its distribution facilities.

Beginning in January 1933, we made the experiment of reducing the price to 10 centimes and of having older school boys and other responsible employees sell the *Mefoe* in the markets as newsboys do. We have also made progress in the selling and distribution by teachers and evangelists throughout our entire area. In ten months of 1933 the circulation was doubled and four thousand copies were printed.

The object of the *Mefoe* was stated recently to the Commissaire de la République au Cameroun as follows: 'To keep the constituency of the American Presbyterian Mission informed on mission affairs, to give them an idea of what is happening not only in the various villages of the Cameroons but also throughout the world, to be a means of instruction, and to enlarge their view of life.'

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