

'Conseils aux Chercheurs'

WE have received from Dakar an interesting booklet called *Conseils aux Chercheurs*, issued by the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (2nd edition 1943). On the title-page it is described as 'une brochure à conserver' and we agree warmly. On the next page we are told that it was compiled 'pour les auditeurs d'un cours élémentaire d'initiation africaine' and was published in the hope that it might be of general use to members of the Institut.

On a much smaller scale than that of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, it has the same object of suggesting lines of anthropological investigation to non-specialists who are, or might be, interested in such matters. It has excellent, short, up-to-date bibliographies under a number of headings. It is interesting to note certain French books published since 1940, for instance H. Labouret, *Paysans d'Afrique Occidentale*, Paris 1941, and L. Homburger, *Les Langues Négro-africaines et les Peuples qui les parlent*, Paris 1941.

Under a further set of headings—geology, geography, meteorology, botany, fauna, pre-history, archaeology, history, physical anthropology, ethnology, language—suggestions are made as to subject-matter and methods of study. Under the heading 'ethnology' we find the following: 'Dans le domaine de la vie sociale, mentale, artistique, religieuse, les sujets d'étude sont innombrables, mais périlleux parce qu'à les aborder sans une connaissance intime et sympathique de la mentalité indigène (exigeant sans doute une pratique approfondie de la langue locale) et avec le lourd handicap des préjugés du "civilisé", on risque de n'en toucher que l'écorce, au cours d'une exploration superficielle.' This commendable note of caution is none the less something of a challenge. Could not a modest beginning be made by supplementing this booklet by another devoted specifically to social anthropology, in view of the importance of the subject? In the meantime, the I.F.A.N. may care to add to its bibliography, Wilson, *The Study of African Society*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 2, second printing 1942. It forms something of a complement to *Conseils aux Chercheurs* on the social aspect of anthropology, and, it may be added, both booklets have the merit of slipping into one's pocket. They will be found useful and stimulating travelling companions.

M. M. GREEN

Translation of the Bible into standardized Swahili

It is welcome news to learn that a Committee has been set up and is already at work on a translation of the Bible in standardized Swahili. With the spread of this language and the increased movement of people throughout a wide area, a version suitable for all Swahili speaking people, which will take the place of the three¹ different versions at present in use, is timely.

The fact that Canon Hellier of the U.M.C.A. has been entrusted with the work ensures a scholarly and reliable translation; there is also a consultative and advisory committee of native assessors and others to assist him.

The need for the version to be one that will appeal to Africans, proud of their own language, should not be lost sight of; hence it cannot be too strongly stressed that the final word concerning idiom (apart from meaning) should be left with the assessors. For example, where a European tends to use a nominal subject, the African prefers the locative subject, provided the direction of emphasis is on place. Compare two of the existing versions, St. Matthew vi. 20: (a) *mbinguni, zisikoharibu nondo wala kutu*, and (b) *mbinguni, paspoiharibika kitu kwa nondo wala kutu*. Word order is another matter on which African opinion is frequently helpful. Compare these two sentences: (a) *Ilipo hazina yenu, ndipo utakapokuwa na moyo wako*, and (b) *Palipo na akiba yako, na moyo wako huwa papo*. The respective

¹ Two only as regards the Old Testament.

merits of word order appear to be evenly balanced and perhaps unimportant, but, read in their context, the thoughtful African would find a difference.

In the matter of vocabulary, the preliminary choice, of course, falls upon the European, until such time as there are Africans versed in Hebrew and Greek. But where there is a selection of vernacular words it is the African who should be the final judge of their respective merits, e.g. *singiza* and *nenea* in St. Matthew v. 11 ' . . . when men shall . . . say all manner of evil against you '.

This new translation should provide an opportunity for the fullest collaboration with African Christian leaders.

E. O. ASHTON

International Discussion Group

DR. MARGARET MEAD addressed a meeting, arranged by the International African Institute and the School of Oriental and African Studies, on 4 October 1943. The title of her address was ' An American looks at Colonial Administration ', and Dr. Mead began by pointing out that in any discussion of the international implications of colonial administration, it was necessary to devise a medium of communication—a verbal currency, as it were, of known value; the use of false analogies, such as a comparison of the British handling of Indian problems with the American attitude to the Negro population of the United States, only tended to obscure the questions at issue and was a bar to real understanding and fruitful discussion. Dr. Mead went on to indicate certain fundamental differences characteristic of the American and British attitudes, not only to colonial administration but also to other questions, such, for instance, as the bringing up of children. The American attitude towards dependent nations and young persons showed a tendency to increase the pace of their advance to adult status by every possible means; the British, on the other hand, tended to favour a slow and gradual development. Not till these differences of attitude were recognized and taken into account could colonial relations become a coinage of international communication.

In the second part of her address, Dr. Mead, speaking as an anthropologist, dealt with the problem of fitting pre-literate peoples to take their place in modern world society. From her studies in Polynesia, New Guinea, the Netherlands Indies, and among the Indians of North America, Dr. Mead had formed the opinion that among those peoples where, owing to the great variety and the orthographical difficulties of the vernacular languages, primary schooling had been given in English, the pupils' capacity for handling the English language, especially in writing, remained definitely below the level of their general intelligence; in writing English they tended to relapse into vernacular idiom, even though they had never learned to write their own language. This experience was confirmed by the results of experiments carried out in the early 1920's among Welsh-speaking children. In the Netherlands Indies, however, where the attitude of Dutch administrators to the teaching of language is entirely different from the British and American, the education of the child started in the vernacular in the village school; later he learned Malay and Dutch, and generally attained an astonishingly correct and fluent command of Dutch and often of other European languages.

Dr. Mead considered that these studies of the teaching and use of language had a bearing on the wider question of what form of education would best prepare a simple, pre-literate people to take its place in the modern world. Experiences such as she had described suggested that if people were made conscious and literate first in their own culture and their own language—in particular, if the crucial step from speech to writing were taken in the language which, as children, they used in their own homes, it was much easier to make them participants in a more complex civilization.

A lively discussion followed Dr. Mead's address, in which Professor Julian Huxley,