

European Education in Kenya

By REV. G. B. CARLISLE.

THE distinction of founding the first European School in Kenya belongs to the members of the African Inland Mission, who started a small school at Kijabe as long ago as 1903. This was designed to provide an elementary education for the sons and daughters of missionaries, and still continues to do so. In those days there was only a handful of children in Kenya, for the settlement of Europeans on the land had not yet begun. A few years later, thanks to the far-sighted vision of Sir Charles Eliot, the country was opened up, land was bought, and settlers and traders arrived to make their homes here. While there were some who preferred to send their children to schools in England and could afford to do so, to others this course was imprac-

ticable, and the time soon came for Government to make a move, if Kenya was to escape the burden of a class of poor uneducated whites.

The first Government School was that at Nairobi, founded in 1910. A few rooms near the Railway Station, which gave the first accommodation, were soon found to be inadequate, and some provision had also to be made for children from up-country. The school was moved to the present site above the town, where some old wood and iron buildings, considered even in those days unsuitable for the Police, were allotted to the staff and pupils. Next year a start was made in temporary quarters at Nakuru for children in the Rift Valley, and in 1915 at Eldoret for

those in the Uasin Gishu, where there was a considerable settlement of Dutch farmers from South Africa.

For ten years this was all the provision made by Government for European education, but soon after the war it was seen to be manifestly inadequate to meet the need. The white population doubled, then trebled itself, as increasing numbers of officials, settlers, businessmen and artisans entered the country. At last in 1925 a fresh start was made to grapple with the position seriously. At Kitale, in the Trans-Nzoia, an old Dutch hotel was converted into a temporary school, to be replaced by the fine buildings, with room for boarders and day-scholars, which were opened in 1929. Early in the same year a new school for 150 pupils, with hostels for boys and girls, was

completed and opened at Eldoret. In the previous year Nakuru School had moved to new buildings on a commanding site overlooking the Lake. Day schools have been established at Mombasa, Nanyuki, Broederstroom, and Thika, while in the Nzoia district a number of Farm Schools, after the example of South Africa, have been opened for the children of Dutch settlers.

At the same time great strides have been made in Nairobi itself. At the Central School in 1928 a spacious new building was ready with a large hall and better classrooms, although the old bungalows, which had been occupied since 1911, still remained to serve the use of boarders. Next year three Junior Schools were opened



European School, Nairobi. Architect: Sir Herbert Baker, A.R.A.

Photo: H. K. Binks, Nairobi.

in Parklands, Westlands and Kilimani to relieve the congestion in the Central School and meet the needs of the growing population. The fact that Parklands School, which was opened first, had soon admitted 140 children, shows how great that need was. In the first term of the present year the elder boys moved up to the new Boys' School opened at Kabete, where the Governor had laid the foundation eighteen months before. Kabete School is unquestionably the most ambitious venture on which the Government has yet embarked. Each big school in turn has been set in a healthy position on a hill, but Kabete enjoys the finest site of all, commanding a magnificent view of Mount Kenya to the north and Kilimanjaro to the south. The architectural design is bold and imposing. Critics may grumble at the cost, but the money will have been well spent, if the School achieves the aim of its founders and its staff as a great secondary school for boys, educating them up to university standard and beyond, and wins the right to be classed in efficiency and character training with our English Public Schools, thus doing for Kenya boys what those schools have done for boys of the

old country. A companion school for girls must be the next step forward and is certainly within the range of vision of the authorities. Meanwhile the central buildings at Nairobi have to be used both as a Girls' Secondary School, with 110 pupils on the register this year, and as a Mixed Primary School with 200 children, an arrangement which obviously cannot last for long. It is satisfactory to know that a clear distinction is being made between primary and secondary education, with separate provision for the needs of each.

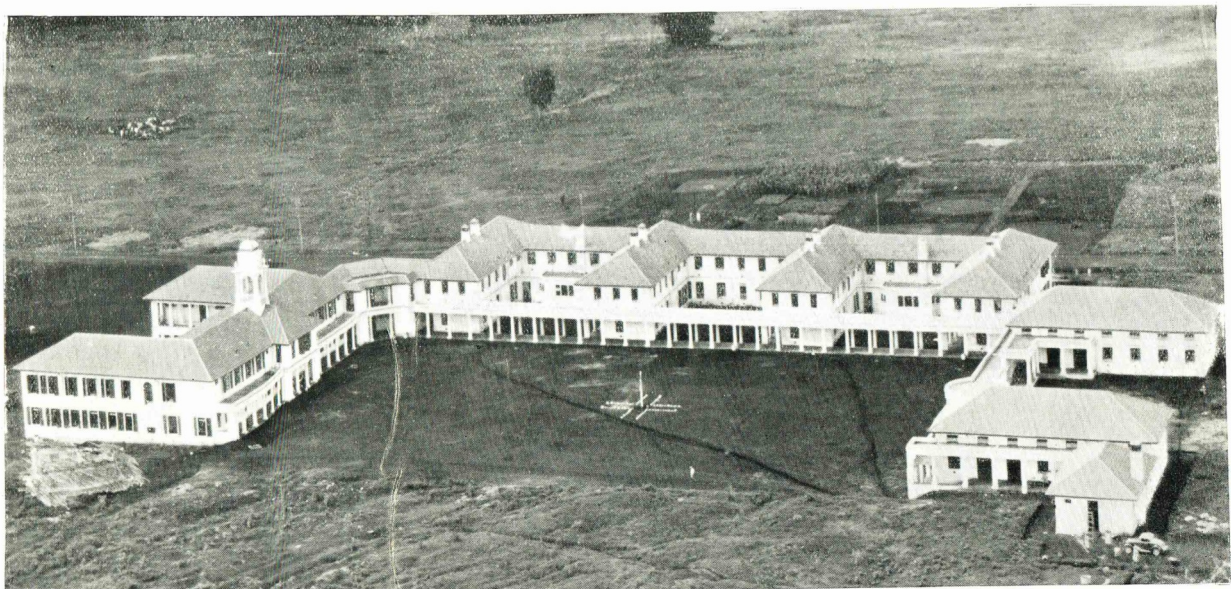
The increase in the annual vote for the purposes of education is a good indication of the increased sense of responsibility on the part of Government. There is a striking advance in the vote for education; European, Indian and Native, from only £7,500 in 1915, to the present figure of £214,000. Great credit must be given to Sir Edward Grigg, who during his term as Governor, used his best efforts to raise the standard and increase the efficiency of education throughout the Colony. He also used his influence with the Rhodes Trustees to secure the grant of a Rhodes Scholarship to Kenya. Already one

boy has been chosen for the privilege, and is now at Rhodes College, Grahamstown, preparing to go up to Oxford to enjoy the full use of the scholarship. A second scholarship is also tenable by a Kenya boy at the Imperial College.

Up to this point we have considered the progress of education under the direction of Government. But it would be quite unjust to pass over the very important contribution which has been made by private initiative. The Director of Education, in a public speech, declared that he welcomed "the opening of every institution which makes individuality, which avoids stereotyped ideas, and which has the courage to strike out along new lines and make new experiments. A school system which provides only for one type of school would be a dreadful thing." As in other countries, the churches have played their part. Many girls owe their whole education to the Loreto Convent at Nairobi, which was opened in 1921, has an average roll of over 100 pupils, and trains them for the Cambridge School Certificate Examination. Last year the old buildings, which dated from 1904, were much enlarged and improved to meet modern needs. There is also a

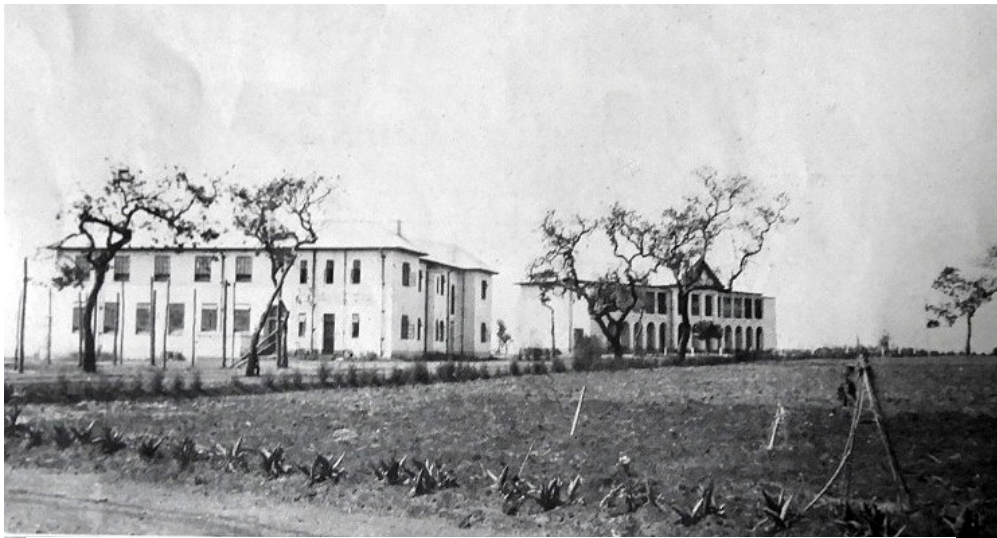
smaller Convent School at Eldoret staffed by the same order of Nuns. Early in 1929 the old Hill School at Limuru was re-housed in a stately building and opened as the Church of England Diocesan School. It stands at a height of 8,000 feet above sea-level with a spacious view across the foothills and plains to Kilimanjaro, 100 miles away, and with an excellent staff of trained teachers promises to be both a health resort and a first rate training ground for Kenya girls. The Hill House School at Nairobi has been in existence for eight years and gives a good grounding to young children, while this year the venture of a new school has been made on the heights at Molo. In this way more has been done for girls than for boys, perhaps because parents, who can afford the cost, like to send their sons to big schools in England.

The opportunity of earlier education, however, is given by two excellent Preparatory Schools. Kenton College Kijabe, situated on the heights above Longonot Station, which was started in 1924, and has some 40 boys in residence, was followed by Pembroke College, Gilgil, in 1927 with room for over 50 boarders. The record of these



European Boys' Secondary School, Kabete. Architect: J. A. Hoogterp.

Photo: H. K. Binks, Nairobi.



European School, Kitale. Designed by Government Architect, P.W.D.

Photo: H. O. Weller.

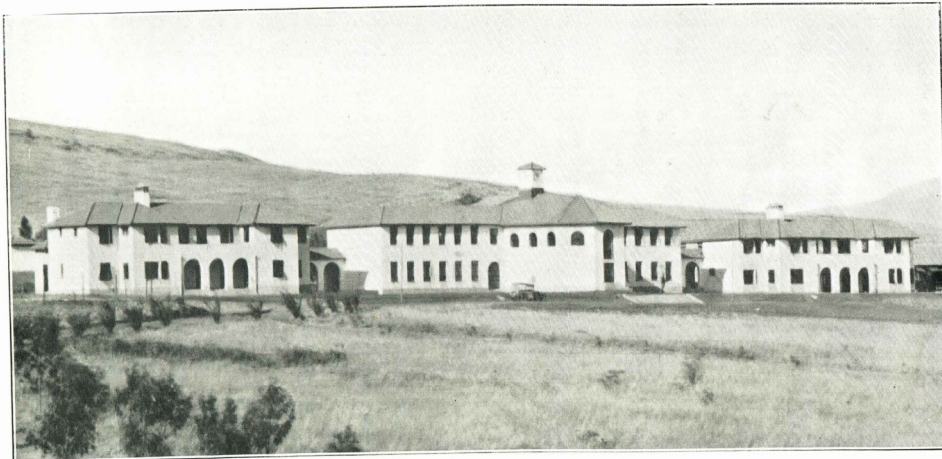
two Schools in the few years of their existence has been wonderfully good, and tells the story of healthy boys who have taken a good place and achieved distinction afterwards at Public Schools.

In recent years several Kenya boys, who have gone to an English University, have done exceptionally well and have taken high degrees in honours. Other Kenya boys are making a good position for themselves in town and country or showing their ability in Government departments.

Professor Huxley in his recent book "Africa View" complains that the Schools are not truly "Kenya Schools" at all, and urges that "education need not be parochial but should be adopted to regional needs." It is quite true that the spectre of public examinations, which

tangled problems of life, and to give them the mastery both of themselves and of the world they live in. This task in the schools depends upon the quality and capacity of the teachers and upon the influence which they exercise there. The secret of successful education in Kenya depends more than anything else on being able to attract teachers of high character, good ability, and the best possible qualifications to work in the country.

A sound education requires also the priceless influence of a good home-life on boys and girls. It is very questionable how far the policy of sending children at an early age to schools elsewhere, far from the influence and background of their homes is a wise one. It is certainly a loss to the parents, and the children tend quickly to become strangers to their own homes. And there is no



European School, Nakuru. Architect: Sir Herbert Baker, A.R.A.

Photo: H. K. Binks, Nairobi.

looms menacingly over school studies, inevitably directs the main course of the syllabus and engrosses the best energies of the intellectual life of the scholars. Except along the lines of nature-study and African history and geography, it is difficult to see how a syllabus can be adapted to "regional needs," unless School Certificate and Matriculation examinations are abandoned altogether. But boys and girls, both at home and at school, are daily surrounded by the Kenya atmosphere and live in intimate contact with the life of Kenya, where conditions tend to breed a very real independence of character. The aim of education is to train boys and girls, as they grow up to manhood and womanhood, in the art of citizenship, to help them to form a right judgment among the many

need now to be over-anxious on the score of health. The fact that the same games and athletics are part of the ordinary round of school-life in Kenya as in England, and demand no unusual effort nor cause injury to health, is just one of many tributes to the climate of the Kenya highlands. And there are already several men and women, born and educated in Kenya, who are now married with homes and healthy children of their own. At least we may be thankful that every year more schools, and more efficient schools in healthy spots are being provided in the country, and that more inducements are being offered to parents to keep their children longer in the shelter of the home, with the prospect of securing for them a sound education up to the higher standards, in the land of their birth.

