Notes for the Guidance of Europeans in the Gold Coast.

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NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF EUROPEANS IN THE GOLD COAST.

1. These notes have been prepared with the object of helping the new-comer from Europe to understand his African subordinates in the Gold Coast. Mutual understanding is more important than is generally realized by the average whiteman, and much unnecessary discontent can be avoided when the European has acquired a knowledge of African customs and ways of thinking. The man who is most successful with the African is the one who knows him best.

2. Labourers who are natives of the Colony or Ashanti usually have a fair knowledge of Europeans. Those from the north are in a different category, for they may not have seen more than half a dozen whitemen in their lives before they come south, and they cannot be expected to understand Europeans, so it is for the latter to understand them.

3. At the outset, it is essential to appreciate that the mind of the African labourer works on a different plane from that of his European master. Reasons which govern a whiteman's actions make no appeal to the African, and *vice versa*.

4. The African can only judge Europeans by those few under whom he works. The European has therefore a definite duty imposed upon him as an educator, and the degree of good or bad knowledge absorbed by the African depends entirely on how good or bad an educator the European may be. Africans are always willing to learn and are appreciative of careful teaching.

5. The most attractive qualities of the African in the Gold Coast are his innate cheerfulness and his good manners. If a servant does not greet his master with a broad grin or is surly or silent there is something wrong somewhere. A master gains tremendously by cultivating a similar cheeriness and it is a good idea to learn at least to say " Good morning " and " How are you " in the various languages of the country.

6. The African is easily pleased and just as easily distressed and disheartened. A word of praise, if it is deserved, goes a long way as does an occasional joke. He appreciates a jest but dislikes being talked down to, or patronised.

7. Funeral customs and tribal feasts are important matters in the life of an African. If a boy wants a day or two off to attend a funeral custom, it is as well to let him go. If he does not leave of his own accord he will be of no use when kept against his will. The same applies when his mother is ill and he asks leave to visit her. If he asks for it, he should, whenever possible, be given a small advance, otherwise he may have to borrow at a high rate of interest. He must get the money somehow.

8. When celebrating his customs the African is best left alone. He is usually a very sober person, but on these occasions it is necessary for him to get drunk, and his lapses during customs can be regarded leniently. In any case, nothing can be done with Africans when they are celebrating customs.

9. It is the rule in this country for a Chief or elder to greet his subordinates. Amongst Europeans it is usual for the subordinate to salute the superior. Many Africans know the whiteman's custom but not all do. If, therefore, no notice is taken of a whiteman walking through a village, it should not necessarily be put down to rudeness, for it is probable that the villagers consider that he is in profound thought and that he would not like his meditations to be interrupted. A wave of the right hand will dispel any doubts on the point. The left hand should never be waved; that is regarded as an insult.

10. Africans do not sit cross-legged in company but they do not mind the European doing so. It is considered rude for an African to stand before his Chief with arms akimbo. The subordinate always passes in front and never behind his superior. A man passing a woman sitting down in the street will go in front of her and not behind her.

11. Africans have their own particular troubles which are difficult for the whiteman to understand. Sometimes, even, it is difficult to discover that there is any trouble at all. In dealing with a dispute between two Africans, so long as the European is patient and sympathetic, he will not be blamed for giving a wrong decision. The winning party will be blamed for bringing better evidence.

12. Africans are accustomed to put forward a complaint through a third party who may be a Chief, a tribal headman or a person chosen for the particular occasion. This third party should not necessarily be regarded as an agitator. He may not even agree with the complainants but according to custom he must submit their complaint.

13. The African is used to tribal discipline in his own home-life and much prefers a strong just master to one who is weak and unstable, friendly one minute and in a violent temper the next. There is no necessity to fraternize unduly for that would be resented by the African himself. So long as the master is both just and sympathetic and the servant knows that he is getting a square deal, there will be no difficulty. The servant likes to feel that he can appeal to the highest authority employing him and no difficulty should be placed in the way of such appeal. A European subordinate does not lose caste with the African if a decision of his is overruled by higher authority.

14. The system of " begging " should be mentioned. When an African has a " palaver " and he wishes to make amends, he will " beg " through a third person by whom the " pacification " and terms of settlement will be arranged. Use is made of this custom for even minor requests such as an advance of pay or permission for a day's leave.

15. The word " Nigger " should be banished from everyone's vocabulary. The African in this country simply cannot stand the term and there is no point in upsetting him unnecessarily. On this account it has for years been considered bad form for Europeans to use the word even amongst themselves.

16. Other epithets to which the African strongly objects are " Fool ", with or without the usual adjective, and being likened to any animal. Much more importance is attached to these terms by Africans than by Europeans, and most market quarrels between natives arise from the use of such epithets.

17. The African likes noise and chatter whilst the ordinary Englishman prefers peace and quietness. On moonlight nights especially there is usually a good deal of drumming in villages. So long as the noise is kept within reasonable bounds it is best not to interfere with their enjoyment. A European should be slow to interfere in what may seem a potential riot but which may be only a spirited argument. The disputants should be allowed to let off steam and talk themselves out.

18. Much unnecesary trouble can be avoided by seeing that instructions are properly understood. Headmen and servants have only a limited knowledge of English, and it is difficult for them to cope with a variety of accents and slang terms. When instructions are not properly carried out, it is unfair to blame the African if he did not clearly understand what was required.

When it is necessary to have instructions interpreted, the European, whenever possible, should employ an interpreter who is used to his voice. The interpreter should be encouraged to ask for an explanation if he does not understand anything. Once an African servant is taught to say " I no savvy ", the rest is easy.

19. African servants have a tendency to reply to a question with an answer which they think you would like to receive. The point should be remembered when it is necesssary to get to the bottom of any particular matter.

20. Labourers who come to this country from the north for the first time are usually young unmarried men who wish to make money which they hope to save and take home. On their return home, the savings will be handed over to the father who will buy cows for the communal herd and arrange for a wife for the son. Every encouragement should be given for the boy to save. Much discontent is caused when a boy is required by his headman to give up part of his earnings as " rake off ", and this practice should be checked as far as possible. It is probable that the " rake off " was originally intended to ensure protection by the headman of a friendless immigrant, but the system has been abused of late years.

21. As regards domestic staff, it should be remembered that cooks and steward boys are a definite profession in this country enjoying a higher status than their opposite numbers in England. It should also be borne in mind that food for the European is quite unlike what the cook is used to himself. This is why the cook is so much more expert with food to which he is accustomed, curries, ground nut and palm oil chop and the like.

22. It is also important to remember that the domestics have their own lives to live and that they have their own particular troubles. Regular hours help both master and servant; and when a boy knows his hours and finds that they are adhered to, he can arrange his private life accordingly.

23. The legal position between a master and his domestic staff is sometimes not sufficiently understood. Wages are paid at the end of the month but under section 8 of the Master and Servant Ordinance, the contract is a daily one. This section reads as follows :—

> " Every home contract of service wherein no agreement is expressed respecting its duration, not being a contract to perform some specific work without reference to time, shall be deemed to be a contract at will and shall be determinable by either party at the close of any day without notice."

24. It is usual for a master who is returning to this country after leave of absence, when he wants a boy to come back to him, to give him a small " dash " by way of retainer. If this fact is noted in the boy's licence it is unlikely that anyone will desire to keep the boy when his master returns.

25. No considerable sums of money should ever be kept in the bungalow. There is no point in putting temptation in the way of the staff. It is important to remember that ninety per cent of thefts and burglaries in bungalows are engineered by servants or their friends or by servants of former occupants. If there is no safe or other secure place in the house and it is necessary to keep money there, it is often best to show the steward boy the money and where it is kept.

26. When going on leave gifts of old clothes, hats, shirts, etc., are much appreciated by the servants. Newspapers are always welcomed by the educated and picture papers by everyone.

27. Amongst themselves domestic servants rank according to the status of their respective masters. Government House servants are accordingly considered to be at the head of their profession. Occasionally, cooks and steward boys will appoint a head boy who is the servant of some junior man ; nevertheless, servants of Chief and Provincial Commissioners, mines managers and agents of commercial firms always regard themselves and are considered to be big men.

28. As regards educated subordinates, it should be borne in mind that the Africans have their own grades of society and allowance should be made accordingly. If the European will pay attention to his clerks, he will be amply repaid for a contented clerical staff is indispensable for the success of any undertaking.

29. Chiefs and tribal headmen should be treated with the respect due to their position. The easiest and most satisfactory way of dealing with Africans in the aggregate is through their Chiefs and headmen, and the latter's position is enhanced when it is seen that they have the support and respect of Europeans. Similarly, their position is rendered impossible when such support is withdrawn. The same respect should be paid to linguists and other recognized representatives of Chiefs.

30. It is a mistake to under-rate the physical courage of the African. In a situation which he understands he can be fearless. Anyone who has, for example, seen an Escort Policeman tackling

an armed robber, a boy coping with a dangerous snake or the crew of a boat in difficulties in heavy surf will appreciate this. Many examples could be quoted also of courage underground and in the bush.

31. The native is usually a very cleanly person and it is customary to bathe twice a day. Soap is always a considerable item in the budgets of labourers and a liberal allowance is appreciated by domestic servants. The habit of bathing is one which the immigrant labourer takes back to his home in the north where water is sometimes scarce, and conditions are more difficult than in the south. On the other hand, the African is inclined to be untidy in the disposal of rubbish such as tins, banana skins and plantain leaves, and this is a matter for education and training.

32. The family system of mutual help is a remarkable feature in the social life of the Africans in this country but too much should not be expected from it. Many immigrant labourers seem to have neither friends nor relations and they have a harder time than is sometimes realized. Africans are specially kind to little children and to the aged. Old people are always treated with the greatest respect. The Africans' treatment of the mentally-deranged is also noteworthy; it is only when a lunatic becomes dangerous that his family will invoke the aid of the authorities. With animals, other than hunting dogs, they are not so good. Much unnecessary suffering to animals and fowls is caused through lack of thought. Here again, it is a matter for education.

33. Africans are learning to appreciate European medical treatment, and injections are especially popular. Nevertheless, raw and unsophisticated natives are sometimes scared of being sent to hospital and pressure may be necessary. They are apt to be careless about small wounds, scratches and ulcers. Where accidents are likely to happen, a First Aid Box is a valuable provision. Even minor injuries should receive attention at once.

34. African women should be treated with respect. They are usually cheery individuals and prepared to be friendly. Nevertheless, any rudeness or disrespect is much resented by them and their menfolk. They may not complain but resentment will be there.

35. The African dislikes being disturbed or overlooked when eating. His house is very much his castle, and he also dislikes anyone walking in on him without warning.

36. Africans resent being requested to settle a debt after dark. It is probably a relic of former times when gold dust was currency, and proper measure could not be made in a poor light. The custom of liquidating debts only in the day-time still prevails.

37. Physical force, i.e. assault, is to be deplored and never does any good. It should be remembered that the African is talking in a strange language, and what may be taken for insolence is probably merely imperfect knowledge.

38. In conclusion, the best advice which can be given to the new-comer is :—

Try to understand the African. Take a real interest in him and help him in everyway you can. Keep your temper, smile and be polite, and never shout or raise your voice when addressing him.

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