

# "NWOSU"

By the Rev. W. NORCROSS

I HAVE known him for a long number of years. At least twenty. From the time of our first meeting I predicted big things for him. He had a manner of bearing himself, a sprightliness of stepping to a task. These promised well. Then he came to us under unusual circumstances. My work in those days was on the seaboard and adjacent was a colleague in charge of a Training Institute. One day a message came from what was then a far, far north, on the very frontiers of our work. Six boys, from this distant place, had been persuaded to enter the Institute. It almost seemed incredible. Actually, it was epoch-making. Prayers were being answered.

Only describable as an adventure of faith, an intrepid worker had gone, lone, bravely, into the hinterland. It was a piece of pioneering which envisaged a great field opening up in later years. High adventure has been more than justified. It brought half a million souls under the Mission's influences.

Three, four years passed and report from this new area was marked by record of a journey here and a journey there; struggles with a new language, and the strange customs of a new tribe. Then six boys! I recall them all so well. Nwosu, Chima, Ebuonu, Azuna, Amachi, Nwonkwo! Nwosu was senior amongst them by three years. That gave him authority. But he claimed authority by virtue of strength in himself. He could lead, and persuade, and encourage. He had ability to discern huge possibilities in this present enterprise. The future might hold much that could not be seen, but anyhow, it promised something new and fine Nwosu had not known before.

## Twenty Years After

Twenty years later! All the promise has been more than fulfilled. Nwosu is now a sub-Pastor, and some day he will be an ordained Minister. But we are going ahead too quickly.

He stayed four years at the Institute. Not very long, but it got him through Standard V. Young people reading this please remember he was receiving instruction mainly in English, a foreign language to him. Remember again, he was living within a tribe speaking a different tongue, a tongue he later learned and became efficient to preach in it with power. And all the time he was adding quality to what was already native in his doggedness and grit. Learning wasn't easy. It isn't easy if you only begin at fifteen or sixteen

years of age, and what knowledge of books Nwosu acquired either at school or in later years he got by sheer determination. Once he has learned he never forgets. All this time he was marking out for himself responsibilities for future days.

Then to work. Further advance had been made by this time. Another new tract of land had been occupied. A refractory and unkindly people spread themselves over it. Who would go to be friend and companion, and interpreter for the Missionary? The choice fell on Nwosu. How nobly he performed a difficult task can only be barely outlined here. Let me say this: he endured persecution and tribulation, and endured bravely. I toiled in that same area in later years, when the work of God had begun to take root, and those who in earlier days had scoffed now came to pray. Nwosu was with me. A group of people appeared from a near-by town. I could not ever forget what happened between those people and Nwosu. What show of rejoicing! and what embracings! What was it all about? I cannot tell the details. But these were they who in a former day had driven Nwosu from their midst with sticks and stones, laying upon him many stripes. Now it is all changed, and faith and courage have their reward.

More years passed by. Still further afield, and we are going to another tribe, and yet another tongue. If it be asked what were our resources we would reply, faith and hope and a Missionary, plus Nwosu. I reached the town where I later made my home. Two thousand people stood about me in the market place and I heard the babble of their strange speech. A decade has gone since then. We ask: What hath God wrought? And we make glad answer in our hearts. Two Gospels and Acts in print. Also a School Primer, a Catechism and a small collection of forty Hymns (at the moment of writing being expanded to one hundred). Can a sentence or a paragraph tell of that? I think not. Could many sentences or many paragraphs tell of Nwosu's share in this task of translation? Again, I think not. It is doubtless on record somewhere. Weeks and months of patient enquiry, of writing and re-writing. Hoping we had succeeded for further knowledge to prove that we only half succeeded, and so a fresh beginning. It is all so confusing to learn from sounds and then to write them. You won't wonder that I am proud of this African Christian, a real Greatheart.

# "DANIEL"

## Daniel: An African School Pioneer

*The writer of this article, the Rev. W. Norcross, has made valuable contributions to our columns in other years. He has had great experience of missionary work in Africa and has taken a keen personal interest in the education of the natives.*

I'VE never known him by any other name. His African name is Mba Mba. Probably he came by his Jewish cognomen out of some childish fancy, when he first went to school and had to be enrolled. In a strange way the name fits him well. A near native equivalent would have been "Obevu," "the mighty one." But that couldn't ever sound so good and brave and important as "Daniel."

He came to us when he had passed his Lower Middle II, the Nigerian equivalent to an English Standard VI. That he had travelled so far and then wished to proceed to a Normal Teacher Training Course under the ægis of another Mission almost went against him. Perhaps a specially discerning Missionary Principal interviewed and accepted him for the Normal Course. That he proved a diligent student, and at the end of two years got his Government Third Class Certificate is about as much as need be said concerning this slice of his life.

He was passing out of the Training Institute just at the time when I was commencing a special piece of work in the opening of a Central School in a new area, and I was needing a special man for it. On the recommendation of the Principal, Daniel came. I believe I am right in putting it on record that when volunteers were asked for Daniel was a whole-hearted one. Buildings were as yet only in course of erection. Government had offered grant-in-aid.

### Starting a School

Lest it be thought that starting a school is much the same the world over, let me remark that such is only correct in part. At any rate, there are factors that make it different in Africa. To begin, all your pupils are "voluntary." There is no law compelling attendance. So attendance is apt to be somewhat desultory and at the whim of the pupil, which can be very annoying to a headmaster. It requires to be known also that notions of education held by a hinterland native can be as crude as they are weird. I have known the fanciful expectations of African

chiefs, fathers of sons, soar to wonderful heights where a "school" and "education" were concerned. It isn't a place, quite, to which to send the bright boys—these can be more usefully employed—but rather to send the dull ones, the great big heavy ones. Likewise the dirty ones. You ought to hear Daniel tell (with much amusement now) how in the beginning pupils came to school so dirty that they had to be taken to an adjacent river by the staff and scrubbed—literally scrubbed—to be fit subjects to receive instruction—especially in hygiene and sanitation.

### A Good Report

This school has struggled through those first stages. It has struggled through so far that one might say it is a school now. We have a Standard V, and, commencing next year, a Standard VI. As I write there lies before me a report on the school made by the Government Inspector. Modesty forbids me to quote. One might be inclined to think that a European Inspector of Schools would yield something to the fact that it is an African school, with African pupils. You may take it from me, he doesn't yield much. See some of the boys now in the upper classes, and they are much transformed from the juniors of six or eight years ago. There are ninety names on the school register. Thirty-four of them are boarders. There are three "houses," "Faith," "Hope," "Honesty" entering into friendly competition both in and out of school. Six teachers complete the staff, two of them holding Government certificates. The compound is a picture of compact tidiness. Class rooms, teachers' houses, and dormitory run along three sides of the football field. There is also a school garden, with its local vegetables, and an item of income in the accounts show: to manufacture of soap, 3s. 6d.

There may be many a reader will turn from this, perhaps with a touch of impatience. I beg your attention a little further, for there is a bright glory about it, deep down. There are a thousand such schools in Africa! Quite true. And so, a thousand bright spots of light being pricked into a heavy pall of darkness. Daniel began the school. If it can be said that one man made a school, then Daniel made this. He began with infants, unkempt, refractory, undisciplined in-

(Continued in next column.)

(Continued from previous column.)

fants. Quietly, doggedly through the years he has toiled, controlling, guiding not only classes, but individual boys. Master of games, instructor in singing; training a choir for church services; daily prayers; anxiety about boarders' money and food and clothes, because parents will forget. No Sundays free, for he preaches, and when not preaching he is choirmaster.

All of which he has done in pursuit of an ideal, an ideal deeply laid—that his people might be saved.

He has left the school now. Others have taken charge since he has gone on the staff at the Training Institute. Whatever of success my Central school may claim in future years, I shall not forget the patience and endurance of Daniel, the school's pioneer. Good schoolmasters in Africa, those chosen from amongst her own sons, are heroes to be honoured. Daniel may be counted amongst them.

W. NORCROSS.