

## Correspondence

THE EDITOR.

*Colonial Cinema.*

Two articles on film titling and captioning have appeared recently in the monthly bulletin of the Colonial Film Unit. They should prove most useful to those engaged in this part of the make-up of a film; an extremely important part it is too, especially when the vast majority of the audiences is not only illiterate, but extremely ignorant of the life, actions and objects which are being projected to them. One cannot help feeling that the recommendations fail to take sufficiently into account African unfamiliarity with numbers of objects of which we unconsciously assume full cognisance in a European audience. For instance, statements describing the operation which is about to be depicted on the screen are often very necessary and are a great help to the African commentator to get away with a flying start. Nothing I found more aggravating to listen to than the commentator trying to explain a picture which had just gone off the screen. Not only, perhaps, could he not remember the sequence, but he had not too clear an understanding of an operation which possibly he had never himself seen performed. Such a common object to us as a motor ambulance requires to be labelled and described in a manner totally different from the short title such as "Rapid collection of the wounded is of primary importance," with which one might introduce the subject to a European audience. Ninety per cent. of my audiences did not know a motor ambulance from a tank.

I think this condition of ignorance both on the part of the audience and the commentator should be taken into greater account when framing titles, just as in writing the running commentaries. For this reason, I devoted some considerable space to the subject in my final report after three and a half years' touring with the mobile cinema in Kenya. This report is, I think, already in your hands.

I am, however, convinced of the fact that titles and short captions in the vernacular or Swahili are much appreciated by those Africans who have come in contact with Western civilisation. Nowadays an ever-growing number thirst for literature and read out the captions to their less sophisticated friends with an air of great superiority. Captions, if suitably framed, have a definite educational value in my opinion.

ARTHUR M. CHAMPION.

### Editorial Note

As yet we have not seen a copy of Mr. Champion's report but hope to do so at an early date. His periodic reports sent during the time he was in charge of the Kenya mobile cinema van were most

instructive. Mr. Champion's long experience as administrator combined with his extensive work with a sub-standard camera add considerable strength to opinions expressed by him.

# Kenya Government Mobile Cinema



1



2



3



4



5



6

*Photographs by Kenya Information Office.*

1 Mr. A. M. Champion, C.M.G., Officer in Charge, Kenya Mobile Cinema, with his staff and the Cinema Van. 2 Mr. Champion working on a map which he uses to illustrate to Africans the different Theatres of War. 3 Kikuyu herd boys watch the van crossing a river in the Kikuyu native reserve. 4 The roads in the native reserves twist and turn, over hills, through valleys, across rivers, amidst some of the most beautiful scenery Kenya can offer. 5 A section of the audience which begins to collect long before dusk. When the show begins they will number anything from three to five thousand. 6 Officer in Charge Kenya Mobile Cinema gives a talk on the progress of the War to an interested audience.