



A U S T R A L I A N L A N G U A G E P I O N E E R

Introductory Note: Australia is a pioneers' country, and the long-dead pioneers are featured and feted in many books and school text books. Needless to say that most of them were not featured and not feted during their life time. On the contrary. They got their unfair share from petty officials and from the governments of their day, from scholars and professors working in the same field, and from the general public. Only when the pioneer is dead for good, only then is he ex-humed, extolled and exploited. But he must ne dead first.

Looking into the windows of Sydney bookstores I was intrigued by a pioneer series which featured Australian living pioneers. Not more than 4 booklets were published by the Australian branch of the London publisher Thomas Nelson. These 4 booklets featured the following men:

SKY SEARCHER IN AUSTRALIA	The Story of Dr. Edward Bowen
VIRUS HUNTER IN AUSTRALIA	The Story of Sir Macfarlane Burnet
AUSTRALIAN SNAKE MAN	The Story of Eric Worell
ANTARCTIC EXPLORER	The Story of Dr. Phillip Law

Of these 4 men only Sir Macfarlane Burnet is better known. He shared in the Nobel prize for his work on immunology. For me, his name is connected with bitter disappointment. My friend Dr. Douglas N. Everingham wrote to him about my work - and received no reply. I wrote to him too, once following up Everingham's letter, and then following up some articles he wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald. I too received no reply whatever. In the meantime, he has been made head of the Australian Academy of Sciences, and at his installation made some brave speech. I wanted to write to him, suggesting that he press his scholarly colleagues to adhere to an ethical code of at least acknowledging letters received, even if this answer is written by a secretary who "regrets that the professor is too busy, etc...." But I realized that my letter will have no effect whatever. Everingham's and mine approach to him are documented in Semantography Series No. 255 which see.

Of the existence of Dr. Edward Bowen little is known among the general public. He is an Englishman who decided to work in Australia, and at times headed the radio telescope at Parkes. I was interested in his life because he proposed a new wheather theory on rainfall, linking it with the recurrent swarms of meteors and their dust which provide the nucleus for waterforming rain drops. His theory is of course hotly denied by his colleagues. Recently I saw his picture in the LIFE Science Book THE SCIENTIST. The caption says that Bowen is of the opinion that a lot of professional scholars don't belong in the university, but in jail. This remark speaks volume and it shows that he must have gone through terrible treatments at the hands of his colleaguges to say something like this.

The third man, Eric Worell is unknown to most. He makes a living by extracting snake poison, and by maintaining a private zoo in Gosford north of Sydney. The fourth man Dr. Phillip Law is totally unknown to most, including myself. He heads the antarctic stations of Australia, and his story is as lacking of original work as is the story of Worell. It is significant that only these 4 men have been chosen, probably as the most prominent "pioneers" of Australia. The booklets are written for children of say 10 to 16 years, and there are a lot of illustrations in colours. The overall impression of these booklets, the text of which has been written by a professional educator Mr. Roy Norry, is that they conform to the conventional educational level prevalent in Australian schools, and are obviously written to please the headmasters and education departments of Australia.

From the beginning, I felt that I will not be considered an Australian pioneer during my life time, because my pioneering work is diametrally opposed to the language teachings in all Australian schools. Nevertheless, I felt that here is a challenge for me, and I sat down to write my own story as I would tell it to children of 10 to 16 years of age. I had no illusions that Thomas Nelson will ever consider it, because it would face the antagonism of the conventional educational hierarchy of Australia, and would thus endanger the commercial future of this publishing house. I was right.

But it would be a pity to throw my story into the dustbin, and so I let it follow on the following pages. Who knows, perhaps in 50 or 100 years when my pioneering work has found recognition, my story may then be printed.

A U S T R A L I A N L A N G U A G E P I O N E E R

The Story of Charles K. Bliss

Chapter I

C H I L D R E N P I O N E E R S O F L A N G U A G E

Of all the creatures, birds have the most musical languages. But now that man has learned to be a bird himself, many a plane crash has been caused by birds, jamming the jet engines. In order to drive the birds away, it was necessary to learn something of their languages.

Scientists soon learned the bird cries which mean "DANGER! FLY FOR YOUR LIVES!" By repeating these tape recorded panic cries over loudspeakers, they could indeed drive birds away from airports, but only birds of the same feather. Other bird species were not alarmed. To their consternation, scientists found that even the same bird species speak in different dialects in different countries.

Thus man has learned some words of birds, and birds have learned some words of man, the parrots for instance. In Australia, there lives the amazing lyrebird. This clever bird can imitate almost any sound. One such fellow must have guessed that the timber cutters in the forest like best the whistle call from the distant sawmill, telling them when to have lunch, and when to go home. He fooled them many a time.

Many animals have distinct words which we can learn to understand. If you love your cat, you will soon learn her cries of love, or pain, or annoyance, or defiance. And cats learn a number of our words.

Dogs are even more advanced in understanding man. "Bring me the slippers!" or "Get the newspaper from the newsagent!" are commands which many clever dogs understand. But the cleverest of them all is the Australian sheep dog, a descendent of the Scottish sheep dog. Some of them understand up to 150 different words, and the yearly sheep dog trials in Australia are the most fantastic proof of this.

In recent years amazing experiments with future "sheepdogs of the sea" have been conducted. Men have realized that they must soon seek more food from the sea by herding schools of fish. They found that the dolphin is highly intelligent, and that he can speak and understand.

And so we come to man. How have the different languages originated with different communities? Twin children in Scandinavia have shown how. Some of them have been left alone in the house, their parents away for days at work in the forest. Slowly the twins invented their own language. Their parents were greatly disturbed, and some parents even learned the language of their children.

When Bliss was a little boy, the children of his age invented the pi language, by putting the syllable pi before all other syllables. "Let's go fishing!" came out "Pilets pigo pifishpiing!" It confounded their parents.

In our time teenagers invent their own words. "He is real cool. Do you dig me?" they say. Their parents in despair learn the new words, as the Scandinavian parents did.

Those stories of twin children inventing their own language has inspired the American scientist Horation Hale as early as 1866 to a theory how languages develop. He found in Oregon, in California, in the interior of Brazil a number of Indian tribes who spoke totally different languages. In primitive times, Hale said, it was common for a single family to wander off from the main band. If disease, or a hunter's misfortune, killed off the parents, leaving their little children to themselves, it depended on the climate of the country whether they could survive. In a mild climate and a bountiful country, such as California, the children did survive, and by inventing their own language they grew into a whole tribe.

When we meet people who speak a foreign language, we feel unhappy and distrustful. "What are they talking about us?" we may think. The Greeks of old made fun of the foreign "gibberish" which sounded like barbarbarbar to them. From this they formed the word Barbar and Barbarian, which came to mean an uncouth and uneducated man. Yet, he could be the kindest and finest man. But his incomprehensible language was a barrier to friendly understanding.

During the last 100 years many men have given much thought to this greatest barrier to mutual understanding and friendly co-operation. They thought that an international language like Esperanto could help mankind. But here again children play a decisive role. They go on babbling as their mother babbled to them when they were babies. The mother tongue has proved of immense strength in keeping communities together. And therefore, people don't like to learn a foreign language, and Esperanto too is a foreign language.

Alas, there is a tragic side to this story. People of neighbouring countries who speak different languages often hate each other, and more than often go to war against each other. And yet, all of them want to live in peace. What a terrifying tragedy - this language barrier to mutual peace and friendship.

We should think that people who live in the same country would gradually come to speak the same language. But in colonist countries like the United States, or Canada, large communities go on speaking almost exclusively French, or German, or Italian, or other languages, although their forefathers came into the country centuries ago.

In South Australia there are towns where German is the main spoken language - though all people there are Australians in the fourth and fifth generation. In New South Wales and Queensland there are villages where Italian is spoken. Yet, all the children go to school and learn English. At home, however, they speak as their mothers spoke to them when they were babies, and when the girls grow up and become mothers, they continue to speak the language of the old home country when they babble with their babies.

It was in one such colonist country in Europe where the Bliss baby came into the world. But Mama Bliss spoke not only one language. The ears of the Bliss baby had to listen to 6 different languages. No wonder that this had a lasting effect on the Bliss boy. His story we shall hear in the next chapter.

Chapter II

THE BLISS BOY BORN IN BABEL

The colonist country where Karl Bliss was born in 1897 was - a hundred years before - a wilderness of virgin forests called Bukowina. The Empress of Austria Maria Theresia had acquired it from the Turks in 1775. She was an impressive lady, and her picture can still be seen on millions of large silver coins, the Maria Theresia Taler (hence the word Dollar) which is still the international currency in all Africa, and which still can be bought as costume jewellery in the jeweller shops of the world.

She had 16 children. One of her beautiful daughters was Maria Antoinette who became Queen of France only to die on the guillotine. Maria Theresia's first-born son was Joseph II who ascended the throne in 1780. When he visited his sister in Paris he saw that France was ripe for revolution. Recognizing the causes, he hurried back to Vienna and issued his famous Tolerance Patents, giving his nationalities Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Assembly, Freedom of Worship, and Freedom from Oppression.

When Joseph visited the Bukowina, he called for settlers to colonize it. And they came from Germany, and Hungary, and Poland, from Russia in the East, from Ukraine in the North, and from Roumania in the South. They all brought with them their own, and different languages and literatures, their songs and dances, their costumes and architecture, and their different ways to worship God.

In 1905 Karl was 8 years old and a Boy Scout. He set out with a few other boys to explore his beautiful homeland. It was like hiking through half of Europe in a single day. They came into a German village called Liechtental, which looked as if it was lifted out of Germany. The next village was Biela Kernitza, which means White Well in Russian, and there were the onion-shaped church spires, the painted houses, and the Russians with their flowing beards walking behind their ploughs as in the picture of Tolstoy. Then came Hadikfalva, a Hungarian village, then an Ukrainian village, then a Roumanian settlement, and in each village a different language was spoken.

There were even medieval villages like Sadagora where men walked around in dresses like the German burghers of the 12th century. They even spoke medieval German. These were the descendants of the Jews who had fled from the massacres of the crusaders to Poland and Russia. For seven hundred years they had kept their medieval German language alive.

Yes, Karl could see what the mother tongue could do in preserving the languages and keeping the communities together. And because he had learned some words of each language, he could greet the villagers in their own mother tongue. Immediately their faces broke into a friendly smile. They invited the boys into their houses and gave them special national dishes to eat. Afterwards Karl took out his mandolin and played some of their national dances, which created an uproar of hilarious happiness.

Karl had learned these different words when listening to Papa and Mama who were forced to speak in 6 different languages to their customers. Life was hard. Father was an optician, mechanic, electrician, woodturner and umbrella maker, and sometimes there was not enough money to buy food for the 4 children. Yet, Papa and Mama Bliss were determined that all their children shall go to the university of their hometown Czernowitz, the capital of the Bukowina.

The boy was fascinated with the things in father's workshop. Papa gave him discarded lenses for making telescopes and cardboard cameras. He showed him how electric cells can make lamps glow, bells ring, and telephones speak. Karl decided to become an engineer. Papa was delighted, but he showed his son that life can mean more than just making a living in an interesting occupation.

At that time the Austrian Northpole expedition of Peyer and Weyprecht returned at last, having discovered and wintered on the large island of Franz Josephs Land (named after the Emperor Franz Joseph). Peyer came on a lecture tour to Czernowitz and Papa took Karl to hear Peyer and to see the vivid lantern slides of his paintings and photographs. The tribulations and tragedies of these hardy explorers made a deep impression on Karl. He knew of ice, and snow, and bitter cold in Czernowitz. Here Karl saw that men were willing to give up all comforts, and to face deprivation and death in a frozen wilderness - for an honour: to explore the unknown, and to give mankind a new insight in our world. Karl eagerly wanted to do likewise.

Mama Bliss was a poetical soul. She read to her children the immortal poems and plays of Goethe and Schiller. She took them to the theatre to see Schiller's freedom plays. Karl liked especially "William Tell" and he could recite whole pages from this epos of freedom. Then came a day when Karl marched out with all other school children to honour Schiller. A marble monument was unveiled and there stood his hero amidst the jubilation of the whole town. But, reasoned Karl, Schiller is long dead. He cannot enjoy the honour. What then are monuments for? They are put up, concluded Karl, to show young boys that it is worthwhile to do great things which could inspire and help later generations. But unhappily Karl realized that he is just an average boy with an average intelligence.

At the high school Karl studied hard to gain scholarships, because his parents were too poor to pay school fees. He was fascinated by the study of chemistry, physics, and geometry, but he was dismayed by the grammar of German, French and Roumanian. The Laws of Nature were regular. The Laws of Language were highly irregular. We say house and houses, why not mouse and mouses? We say I drink and I think. Why not I drank and I thinked? He found that most verbs are irregular in all languages. Besides, why call that wonderful liquid water, wasser, eau, acqua, voda and in thousand more names, when it is the same in all countries.

But then Karl discovered languages which are the same in all countries. They are written "languages." In the language of mathematics $1 + 2 = 3$ can be read and understood in all languages. So are the geometrical lines for a triangle, a square, a circle and many more such geometrical meanings. But isn't the alphabet also written with geometrical lines? It is, but with a difference. One vertical line stands for the sound I. One vertical and one horizontal line may mean the sound L or T. Three lines mean F, and if we add to it one more line we get the sound E. So we see that the alphabetical letters stand for the sounds only, not for the meanings of the words they form in the many different languages.

At that time Karl was already a teenager, and he began to notice the beauty of girls. Shyly he did what boys of all countries have done throughout the centuries. He drew a heart and an arrow piercing it. This is a picture of a feeling. When a boy sees suddenly the girl he loves, he feels a sweet pain in his heart, as if an arrow has pierced it. And girls feel likewise. This then is the international symbol for love. The arrow itself is used in traffic signs, but it doesn't mean an arrow anymore. It stands for a direction only.

Then Karl discovered the language truest to nature, the symbols of chemistry. H_2O means water in all languages, and it shows that water is composed of two parts Hydrogen and one part Oxygen. The same logic holds true with all other formulas of chemistry. No wonder that Karl loved chemistry and excelled in it. He became assistant to his chemistry teacher, and he built his own chemical laboratory at home. His explosions shook the neighbourhood, and the fume and stench was sometimes hard to bear. But Papa and Mama were happy about it. They knew that Karl will become a good chemical engineer. Life looked bright indeed.

Then suddenly the heavens came crashing down, and Europe turned into a flaming inferno in which millions of people perished. And it was brought about by language.

Chapter III

KARL GOES THROUGH THE WAR OF THE WORLD

The word nation comes from the Latin natus being born. Hence a native of a country. The Romans gave citizenship to people born on any Roman territory, regardless of race and language. So did the British, even to foreign babies born on a British ship. This is a truly grand concept leading to world citizenship.

But in our time the meaning of nation has been disastrously degraded to mean only those people who speak the same language. In old Austria about 20 different nationalities lived and worked together. But there were compatriots of the same languages across all borders. Rabid nationalists of both sides were determined to tear the Austrian Empire asunder, and to unite in separate national states all Germans, all Poles, all Ukrainians, all Czechs, all Slovaks, all Serbs, etc. And it was a Serb from Serbia who took matters in his own hand, and assassinated the Austrian Crownprince and his wife when they visited the Austrian province of Bosnia bordering on Serbia. The year was 1914.

The German speaking rulers of Vienna decided to punish Serbia, because the German Kaiser has promised them all help. It was a case of Germans helping Germans against the Serbs who were Slavs. But Russia considered herself the Mother of all Slavs, the champion of Pan Slavism. Russia stood by Serbia - and within a few days the whole of Europe was aflame in a life and death struggle.

Millions perished. Many more millions were maimed or in utter misery. When the senseless slaughter ended 4 years later with the defeat of Austria and Germany, the American President Wilson pored for months over the linguistic maps of the defeated countries, trying to define the frontiers of the new independent national states. And then he realized what everyone knew in Austria, that it is impossible to draw frontiers according to language. In some villages and provinces the same language was spoken. But in adjacent villages and provinces, and especially in the towns, the nationalities had intermingled and intermarried.

When the new frontiers were drawn at last, hundreds of thousands found themselves as second class citizens in "enemy territory." These small and weak states fell within days when the new overlords Hitler and Stalin struck. The motto of old Austria for her 60 million people was "Viribus Unitis" - "United we stand!" Divided they fell. The concept of "One Language One People" had failed disastrously.

But nobody knew of all this when the world war started. Karl read in deep emotion the appeal of the Emperor Franz Joseph "An meine Voelker" "To my Nations," printed in all languages spoken in Austria and Hungary. Franz Joseph had lost before his beautiful wife the Empress Elizabeth who was murdered by an Italian to avenge the Italians living in Austria.

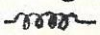
And now a Serb had murdered the Crownprince and his wife for a similar reason. Karl decided to volunteer for service in the army. Together with his friend Paul they went to the recruiting office. When their age was found out, the sergeant major told them: "Go home to mother, boys, you don't know what war is!"

Undaunted - their parents couldn't stop them - Karl and Paul joined a Red Cross field ambulance, and within 2 days they were on the battlefield. They saw in horror what war really is. They had to collect dead Austrian and Russian soldiers with their waxen faces and mutilated bodies. They were sick to death when, drenched in blood, they helped the wounded to the field hospital. And when Karl spoke with some Russian prisoners of war, he realized that Austrian Ukrainians had shot at Russian Ukrainians, Austrian Jews at Russian Jews, even Austrian Germans at Russian Germans. These were "Volgadeutsche" Volga Germans descendants of the German farmers who settled in the Volga basin in the 18th century when they followed a call of the Empress Catherine II, herself a German princess.

Thousands of these Volga Germans, who spoke perfect German, were in the vanguard of the Russian armies who overrun Germany from the East and captured Berlin in the second world war. And from the West came thousands of American soldiers, who too spoke perfect German, being the grandsons and greatgrandsons of German settlers in America. Even their commanding general was of German stock. His name was Eisenhower (iron worker). His family had changed it to Eisenhower, in order to preserve the correct German pronunciation in English.

In 1915 Karl eventually joined the army. His family in Czernowitz lived through their own horrors of war. The town was captured three times by the Russians, and recaptured each time by the Austrians. The bombardments, and the anxiety for his family was too much for Papa. He died in November, 1917 deeply mourned by his family. Karl had lost his best friend.

In 1918 the war ended, and Karl returned to the Bukowina, which was now Roumania and in ruins. His younger brothers Isidor and Heinrich had to give up their high school studies, and had to work in Papa's workshop to earn the food for the family. But Mama wanted to fulfil Papa's dearest wish, that Karl should go to the university. In 1919 he went to Vienna and studied so hard that he graduated with highest marks within 3 years, instead of the prescribed 4 years. Immediately he found employment as research chemist with a firm making electrical and electronic equipment.

Now he used the international language of chemical symbols all day. But with radio coming up, he helped to make an even better international language, the pictorial symbols of electronics. This is the picture of a coil  and it looks like a coil. This is a condensor  . This the antenna  and this the earth wire leading to the earth  , etc.

Then Karl was made chief of the invention and patent department. Now his real struggle with language began. He had to study scientific papers and patent specifications in too many languages. He realized that this is the greatest handicap to scientific co-operation. He thought that Esperanto might help, but then he realized that nobody wants to learn another foreign language. If only a complete language system of pictorial symbols could be invented, thought Karl - but it seemed an impossibility.

Karl had found a wonderful life-companion, his wife Claire. Together they climbed and hiked through the mountains of Austria, Italy, and Switzerland where a view opened up to Karl more grandiose than the grandiose alpine scenery. In Switzerland he saw people of 4 different languages German, French Italian, and Ladin (Latin) living together, standing together, and even fighting together if necessary. He remembered Schiller's words of the Swiss oath in "Wilhelm Tell":

"Wir wollen sein ein einig Volk von Bruedern
In keiner Not uns trennen und Gefahr!"

"We will be one united Folk of Brothers
Not torn apart in danger and in need!"

Then he remembered who taught these words to him, his good mother. He brought her to Switzerland where they visited all the places where the Tell saga had taken place.

By then Karl was recognized the best mandolin player of Vienna, and he appeared many times on the concert podium as a soloist, accompanied by an orchestra, and even by a group of the Vienna State Opera orchestra. But deep in his heart his boyhood dream of helping humanity receded - beyond hope.

And then the heavens came crashing down again, and Europe turned again into a flaming inferno in which many more millions of people perished than in the first world war. And again one of the main causes was language, but in a totally different way.

Chapter IV

KARL GOES THROUGH A HUMAN HELL

As a student and in later years Karl liked to debate the problems of our world. More than often he saw how people, speaking the same language, couldn't understand each other. Why? Because they used the same crucial words, but understood their meaning differently.

Sometimes Karl met a man who would contradict the opinion of everybody. Mischievously, Karl came up next time with that man's opinion. Immediately he contradicted Karl. "Hey," said Karl, "that was your opinion last time." "Ah, but last time it was different," said the man, and brought forth new arguments, which looked quite convincing. Yet, somewhere must be the lie, Karl thought, but where?

He soon learned that such men are known in every country and every language. In German they are called "Wortverdreher" - "word twisters." But they don't twist the spelling, pronunciation and grammar of words - only their meaning. Open up any dictionary, and you will find that many words have more than one meaning, some even 10 or more, all nicely numbered, and often contradictory - a heaven for word jugglers.

In shock Karl realized that word twisters are not made. They are born with a twisted mind. Just think of the many cheeky children who have a cheeky answer to everything their parents say. When such boys grow up, they become tyrannical fathers and bosses who make life miserable for everyone around. When they become politicians, they can incite people to riots, revolts, massacres, and even wars. And all is done in the same language supposed to be understood by everybody.

In a humorous way Karl was a word twister himself. From his father he had inherited a sense of humour. Papa loved to make everybody laugh. But why do people laugh? Because many jokes are twists of meanings. "Attention please! Passengers who take the train to Newcastle must bring it back!"

When Karl became chief of the patent department, word twisting became serious. The giant radio manufacturers wanted to ruin Karl's firm. They claimed infringement of their patents, and launched court actions in various European countries. Karl took up the challenge, but it looked like a hopeless fight of David against a number of Goliaths. The fight is done with words. Many patent specifications contain vague and ambiguous words which are in later years deliberately interpreted as if they also cover new technological advances. Karl's brilliant knowledge of physics and chemistry helped him to convince the experts and the judges that the scientific words in question do not apply to the products of Karl's firm.

In order to attend to the court hearings Karl had to travel to various European capitals. And it was in Berlin where he came face to face with the worst word twister of all times Adolf Hitler. He listened to his speeches, and he looked into the frenzied faces of the listeners, all intelligent and literate Germans. How could they swallow Hitler's lies, Karl asked himself.

The world believe that Hitler's trick was to repeat the same lie so many times until people believed it. But can this be true? Suppose Hitler would have told trillions of time the following gigantic lies:

According to German counting $2 + 2 = 5$

German girls consist of pure gold

Germany above all, measured from sea level

Would any German boy or girl, man or woman ever believe this? Never! What then are the lies which don't look like lies, but seem truth instead? When Karl found it out, it was too late. He was already Hitler's prisoner in the death camp of Dachau near Munich. He was one of the first arrested when Hitler overrun Austria. But why? Karl was not a political man.

It had something to do with his upbringing. From Mama he had learned of Schiller's immortal words for Freedom. From Papa he had learned to tell jokes. He was in Germany almost every month. Whenever he came back to Vienna he told of the suppression of freedom there, and he told the latest Hitler jokes. He was a marked man. But he could never have been a danger to Hitler.

When he arrived with the first batch of Austrian prisoners in Dachau, Karl couldn't find any prominent politician, socialist or communist among them. Instead, they were all small and insignificant men like Karl himself. Why then have they been chosen to be the victims of horrible torture? Karl found it out later. It was word twisting again. Anyone who said anything in the grocershop, or in the tram, which might be twisted to mean a slur against the Nazi regime, could be arrested and shipped off to a death camp. They arrested deliberately innocent people in order to throw fear into the whole population, so that no one should dare to oppose them.

Nothing you have ever read or heard about those death camps can give you the reality of the agony and torture men went through. Yet, those were the good old days of the concentration camps. The daily death toll of 20 to 40 prisoners was only due to "natural causes" exhaustion, sickness, beating, torture, shooting - and suicides in the day and suicides in the night. The time was still 1938, not 1943 when the Nazis began to exterminate systematically millions of Jews, Poles, Russians, Gypsies and other "inferior" races.

Karl remembered the first world war. The German High Command had issued Nietzsche's books to the soldiers. Nietzsche, the German philosopher, had coined the words of the "Herren Rasse," the "Master Race", the Supermen destined to rule over all other inferior races. Nietzsche died a mad man. His words, taken up by other mad men, caused the death of millions.

Within a few weeks Karl was a physical wreck, and at the end of his endurance. He felt sure to die soon, never to see his beloved again. Why continue the agony? He thought of suicide day and night, and began to talk incoherently. An old prisoner recognized the symptoms, shadowed Karl, and caught him with a razorblade about to cut open his arteries. He gave Karl a severe scolding, which didn't help. What did help was a word twist.

One of the inmates was the famous comedian Fritz Gruenbaum. "What shall I do, Fritz?" said Karl, "I want to kill myself." "So do I" said Gruenbaum, "but look! Today is Wednesday. Three more working days, and there will be Sunday with "Rindfleisch mit Kartoffel Salat" (beefsteak with potato salad), the only good meal in a week. Wait with your suicide till Monday. My advice to you is: "Prolongieren!" Karl couldn't help laughing. "Prolongieren" had only one meaning in Austria - when you can't pay your bills and promissory notes. You then ask the court to prolong your payments.

The joke helped Karl, but it didn't help poor Fritz. He prolonged his death for 5 long years until he was gassed in 1943 in Auschwitz.

What really helped Karl was music. He found an old mandolin in one hut. Suddenly he was the centre of attraction. But Karl didn't play famous tunes from operas and operettas. This would have reminded everyone of the outside world, now lost forever. Karl had taught himself in foregoing years the almost forgotten art of improvisation, of making your own music according to your mood of the moment. When everyone had bedded down for the night, Karl took out the mandolin, and played in the darkness his own soft tunes of defiance and hope. "Let's hold out" his mandolin sang as they fell asleep. Thus Karl found strength by giving strength to others.

And then a new word came up that gave Karl a false new hope. The word was Buchenwald. Buchenwald - the word had a wonderful ring for Karl. His homeland was the Bukowina which meant Buchenland in German - Beechland, because there were vast woods of beech trees. Buchenwald means Beechwood. It sounded good, and so Karl and his fellow-Austrians prepared for transfer to the concentration camp of Buchenwald near Weimar on the Ettersberg where Goethe used to walk.

Alas, Buchenwald was worse than Dachau. For one thing, they didn't get enough to eat. When they got a salted herring for an evening meal, there was no water to quench their thirst. Water was turned on for half an hour in the morning only. Crazy by hunger and thirst, they went almost out of their minds, couldn't sleep at night, and couldn't work their quota in the day. Once Karl passed the pigsty where pigs were fattened for the officers' mess. A kitchen orderly threw a bucket of potato peelings to the pigs. Karl felt an irresistible urge to throw himself on the ground and feed with the pigs. Only fear helped him to preserve his sanity.

But help was in coming. When Karl didn't come home on that fateful 18th March, 1938, Claire, in utmost alarm, found soon out that he was in the Gestapo prison. She decided to fight for his freedom, and in a way language helped her. For Viennese people the Prussian dialect is almost unbearable, almost like a foreign language - and vice versa. But Claire was not Viennese. She was a German Aryan from the Reich. She could talk their language when she went to the Gestapo to plead for Karl's life.

But something had to be done inside Buchenwald too. Karl had to leave the mandolin in Dachau. He wrote in veiled words to Claire to send his mandolin and guitar as "gift for the camp orchestra." With them Karl played before the blackguards, and pleaded for his freedom in the international language of music. On the 14th April 1939 Karl went out of Buchenwald *a l i v e*. Claire had a British permit waiting for him, but not one for herself. Karl was forced to leave immediately for England. He promised Claire to get her over quickly. But when he got the permit for her, Hitler had declared war on Poland, and the second world war was on. Claire fled to Czernowitz in Roumania, and stayed with Karl's family, but all her hopes to come to Karl had ended.

Eventually they sank into each other's arms in Shanghai after three years of terrible separation. Karl went West via Canada and Japan to the International Settlement of Shanghai, and Claire came from the East via Greece, Turkey, Russia, Siberia, and Manchuria. When Karl stepped onto the soil of China a wonderland of language opened up to him.

Chapter V

KARL CLIMBS THE GREATER WALL OF CHINA AND LOOKS INTO A LANGUAGE WONDERLAND

"I bless the day when I came to China. My life has been given a high purpose, and my boyhood dream came true!" With these words Karl concluded many a lecture in Shanghai, and later in Sydney.

After the blackouts of war-time London, Shanghai looked at night like a fairy city with myriads of multi-coloured neon lights in the fantastic shapes of Chinese symbols. What do they say? And why are they so complicated, asked Karl. He hired a teacher to find out. Yes, they are complicated, but as he learned their meaning, a magic spell was cast upon him. He could read headlines in the Chinese papers, but not in the Chinese language spoken in Shanghai. He read them in German and English. After a while, even German and English words disappeared from his mind. Instead he saw vividly in pictures what the headlines said: **AMERICAN WARSHIPS IN BIG BATTLE.**

He read what he could find about Chinese writing. The modern philosopher and writer Lin Yutang said that China's greatest wonder is the "Greater Wall of China" its symbolic writing. Anyone who climbs this wall will find a wonderland. Karl did, and the view from the top was truly unbelievable. He saw a vast continent of hundreds of millions people speaking different languages, and yet, they could read the same paper, and the same book, and they could write letters to each other. They could even read the Chinese classics written 2500 years ago in languages long forgotten.

Scholars agree that this universal writing has united many tribes and many races of many languages into the largest nation on earth. Even the many invaders learned to read it in their own languages, and it made them Chinese in the end. These scholars are convinced that a European nation would have been a reality centuries ago if Frenchmen and Finns, Englishmen and Estonians, Greeks and Germans, Romans and Russians, and all the others, and a common bond in a common writing which they all could read in all their languages.

Karl saw in Shanghai schools that children pick up these partly pictorial symbols much quicker than the alphabet. He saw that only 1500 basic words, expressed in symbols, are sufficient for reading the papers and for writing letters.

It seemed incredible, fantastic, marvellous. Could a modern simple system of pictorial symbols be perhaps the mutual bond between people speaking different languages? All the nations could continue to cultivate their own language and literature, and could use this auxiliary universal writing only where the language barrier must be bridged for international understanding and co-operation in travel, commerce, industry, and science. Karl realized that a few pictorial symbols are already used on the motor roads of the world, where understanding in all languages is a matter of life or death. This symbol  means in all languages **A CURVE TO THE RIGHT IN THE ROAD AHEAD.** It is simple, and can be grasped at high speed, and under the stupor of liquor.

Suddenly Karl's heart missed a beat. He remembered his boyhood dream. He wanted to invent something that could help humanity. This is it! BUT, he wondered, is it possible to invent pictorial symbols for all the complexities of modern languages? He remembered Edison who said that the success of a new idea depends

on 2% inspiration, and 98% perspiration. Perspiring in the torrid heat of Shanghai was easy, but working on this idea at night after an exhausting working day wasn't easy. But his unfailing will to succeed, and the unfailing love of Claire made him oblivious of all the terrible hardships in wartorn Shanghai.

At last peace came in 1945, and it looked as if the Allies could preserve permanent peace over the whole globe. But suddenly Stalin turned against the West, negated all his promises for a democratic Poland, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania, Bulgaria, and other nations who all fell under the communist yoke. The world looked worse than before. Karl was utterly downcast. Was there any sense in working for a better understanding among all nations?

In 1946 they received a settler's permit for Australia and came to Sydney. Here a new world opened up to them. They found not only a new home land, but also new hope for humanity. They saw the Australian people who have achieved democratic liberties unknown in many parts of the world. Australia won the 8 hour working day one hundred years before Europe did. Every worker has his legal right to a basic wage enough to sustain him and his family. And their home? A tenement house like the many thousands in Vienna where three families have to share one water tap and one toilet? Karl learned in amazement that London with her 7 million people has 21,000 streets, whereas Sydney with less than 2 million people has 14,000 streets. Why so many? Because 80% of all Australian families live in one family house complete even with their own garden. "Here I can continue my work," said Karl to Claire, "the Australian people have shown me that it is worthwhile to work for a better future."

Alas, not all was rosy. In Shanghai everyone, Americans, Britons, Frenchmen, Chinese, and others were enthusiastic about Karl's work, because they could see in China that even an archaic and complicated symbol writing can work wonders. But in the world outside China everyone was convinced that the alphabet is much better. He could not find support and encouragement from many teachers, educators and professors in America, Europe, and elsewhere. Should he give up?

He decided to study the problem from all angles, and to test his symbols. As a practical engineer he had learned to drop a thing which isn't practical. And so we find Karl in Sydney's libraries, reading, studying, thinking, and working. He was happy when he could reduce his basic symbol elements to 100 only, of which 30 are already internationally used (see later). He was jubilant when he found that his symbols contain a simple symbolic logic and semantics (see later). Hence he called his system Semantography, from Greek semantikos significant meaning, and graphein to write.

In all books dealing with the problem of human understanding across all languages he found references to the great philosopher and mathematician Leibnitz who, 300 years ago, prophesied that one day a simple "Symbolis Universalis" will be invented, a system of pictorial symbols, that will also contain a simple symbolic logic and semantics, helping us to recognize vague, ambiguous and false statements in much the same way as children today can read the statement $1 + 2 = 4$ and can realize that it contains a lie. But for 300 years Leibnitz' speculation has been considered impossible to realize.

In 1949 Karl published his 3 volumes on his Semantography, and Professor Oliver L. Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh stated in a lecture to the American Association for the Advancement of Science

"Bliss realized the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz."

Leibnitz himself never thought that we should give up our alphabetical writing. We should use the new symbols only as an auxiliary medium of communication where needed. Still, most learned men and laymen alike believed that the alphabet is the best possible way of writing. If you dear reader believe this too, then read the next chapter carefully and thoughtfully.

THE 26 LETTERS VERSUS THE BLISSYMBOLS

Imagine an illiterate Eskimo who takes reading lessons from an English professor of phonetics, the science of pronunciation. Our Eskimo learns how to pronounce every letter of the alphabet, but then learns in consternation that he has to pronounce them utterly different when they form in combination thousands of words. Take for instance the words through and thorough. Our Eskimo must forget the pronunciation of t and h and o and u and g. Instead he must learn that through reads sru, and thorough read soro. But after long studies he can read an English paper with the best pronunciation of Oxford University. But does he understand what he reads? NOT ONE WORD. He has only learned the pronunciation (phonetics) of words, not their meanings (semantics).

Imagine another Eskimo taking reading lessons, but this time from a French Professor of phonetics. He has similar troubles, but after long studies he too will be able to read a French paper in the proper pronunciation of the Paris Sorbonne. But does he understand what he reads? NOT ONE WORD. He has learned only the phonetics, not the semantics of the French words.

Imagine the English Eskimo trying to read the French paper with English pronunciation. No Frenchman would understand him. And similarly no Englishman would understand the French Eskimo reading the English paper. Give both Eskimos a line in German to read. Both readings would be totally different, and totally incomprehensible to a German.

What does this mean? That the alphabet is a mockery. Therefore the cry for a better phonetic alphabet. But professors are against it. They say that pronunciation changes in every family, every community and every country. Today's perfect phonetic alphabet would be another mockery 50 years later.

But the professors have an even better argument. They say that it doesn't really matter how we spell and pronounce most words. We never read diligently letter by letter. Instead, we take in a glance the whole "letterpacket" and pronounce it regardless of the spelling, and understand it regardless of the pronunciation. Take the two words thorough and fare. You have learned what they mean. But what does the combination "thorough-fare" mean? A thorough all-inclusive fare for a railway journey? Not at all. It means a wide road. Professors say that the letterpacket "thoroughfare" conjures up the same picture for a wide road. Similarly the letter packet man conjures up the same picture for an Englishman, as homme does for a Frenchman, and uomo for an Italian.

If letterpackets stand for pictures, says Bliss, let's draw the pictures themselves. This pictorial symbol Λ stands for a male human being in all languages. Now we understand why it is so much simpler to write in symbols $1 + 2 = 3$ because we can read and pronounce it in many different alphabetical words in the many languages of mankind. We may be now more tolerant towards a symbol writing.

But this is only the beginning of our new tolerant attitude. So far, we have dealt only with the phonetics, not with the meanings, the semantics of the "letterpackets" in all languages. How long does it take for a child to learn the meanings of letterpackets, that is of words? In its 10th year it may know the meanings of about 2000 to 3000 words. Professors found out that farmers get along with 3000 to 5000 words, tradesmen may know 5000 to 10,000 words, intellectuals 10,000 to 15,000 words, professionals 15,000 to 25,000 words, and professors 50,000 to 100,000 words.

What does this mean? It means that every word we learn is a letterpacket, that is a sound symbol expressed in the sound elements of the alphabet. And as professors found out we need to learn thousands of such sound symbols, and must learn the meaning of each symbol the hard way. Is it then fair when people say: "Look at Mr. Bliss. We have our simple 26 letters of the alphabet, and he wants us to learn thousands of symbols." They just don't realize that they must learn thousands of symbols in their own language. They don't consider that the pictorial Blissymbols are built up of about 100 basic symbols of which we use already internationally 30. Educators have found out that children learn these symbols quicker than words, and they boldly and logically combine them to new meanings they need when writing to children in other lands.

It was clear to Karl. It was clear to Claire. It was clear to many men and women, and to a number of great scholars. But others refused to see the advantages of such an auxiliary international writing for bridging the language barrier in international travel, commerce, industry and science.

Karl's hopes for recognition of ^{his} work went down and down. Claire couldn't bear his despair. In 1953 her heart broke. She held out for 8 more years, helping Karl in every way, until her loving heart stood still on the 14th August 1961. For Karl the world stood still, and the following years were agonies of desolation - until the turning point came.

Chapter VI

RECOGNITION COMES SLOWLY

In 1964 businessmen in the travel organisations, in the hotel and motel associations, in the railway, buses, shipping and airlines, and in the automobile and tourist organisations realized that the Babel of languages is the greatest handicap to enjoyable travel, and that only pictorial symbols which can be read in all

languages provides the only solution.

In previous years, the government departments responsible for the safety of the roads have initiated such pictorial symbols, but only a few, and some of them different in different countries, and even in different states of one country like Australia or the United States. Now the same happened in the travel organisations. Airline associations began to display pictorial symbols which were contradictory, and which were interpreted differently by various travellers.

Karl found that the greatest handicap to a unified symbol code was the personal pride and prejudice of the officials involved. No official would admit that his symbols are not so good than the symbols of another guy. Neither would he agree to take his own symbols down and replace them with the symbols of the other official. So far, all the conferences of the organisations involved produced no result whatever.

Karl's hope was that reason will prevail when it becomes known that a complete symbol system exists in which every meaning can be expressed. In this hope he approached the organisations with the following paper addressed

TO ALL OFFICERS

OF ALL ORGANISATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND PRIVATE FIRMS

WHO INTEND TO USE IN THEIR ACTIVITIES

PICTORIAL SYMBOLS

which can be read and understood in all languages.

This paper forms issue No. 303 of the Semantography-Blissymbolics Series. It is attached to this story. The French translation forms issue No. 304, and the German translation issue No. 305.

In addition he worked out a Sample Tourist Folder under the title

UNIVERSAL PICTORIAL BLISSYMBOLS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLER

This folder forms issue no. 280 of the Semantography-Blissymbolics Series and is attached to this story.

Alas, not only the officials proved a great obstacle. Some people realized that money can be gained by designing pictorial symbols. They began to approach organisations and foundations and the members of the United Nations asking for money, and much money at that in order to make a good living by designing pictorial symbols. It came to them as a shock when they learned that Bliss has already solved the problem. Naturally, they used all sorts of subterfuges to reject the Blissymbols. Karl went through terrible times of disappointment. When that group of designers and symbol seekers organised even a congress, and were resolved that Karl's work shall not get the recognition it deserves, Karl wrote a paper for this congress titled

I PROTEST AND I ACCUSE!

It forms Semantography-Blissymbolics issue No. 283 and is attached to this story. The French translation forms issue No. 284, and the German translation issue No. 285.

The organisers of this congress found an elegant way to suppress Bliss' protest. Although Bliss sent hundreds of copies of this Protest together with hundreds of copies of the Sample Tourist Folders for distribution to the participants of the Congress, the organisers distributed only the tourist folder, but not the protest. It was as simple as that.

And yet, Karl is undaunted. Indeed he is full of good cheer. All these happenings prove to him that his idea has been recognized as workable, and that sooner or later his work will receive the recognition it deserves. It may take 50 years, or it may take a hundred years. It doesn't matter. Karl fights on, and will fight on to his last breath. When this story is finished Karl has also completed a new leaflet with a hilarious "punch" directed against those symbol designers and symbol officials who believe that they can design symbols which can be instantly understood without any learning. This leaflet forms the issue no. 306. It's shortened title is

PICTORIAL SYMBOLS AND "PUNCH"

It is attached to this story.

But pictorial symbols for travel and communication are only a small part of the scope of Karl's work. Dearer to his heart is the use of his work for conquering illiteracy in all the backward countries of the world by giving to the whole mankind

"ONE WRITING FOR ONE WORLD"

It may take hundreds of years until his work will be taught in the schools of the world. Karl has found out that educators are the most conservative people. But Karl is convinced that his time will come.

The time will also come for teaching children and adults his simple logic and semantics. Nothing of this has been explained in this story, because it would make the story too long. Nothing has also been told of Karl's discoveries about the evolution of language and the evolution of modern man who kills his fellowman in religious and political wars and finds enough words to justify all atrocities and all crimes committed in the name of God and Fatherland and all the isms which men have invented to wage war on other men. Karl is sure that the time will come when this, the highest aspect of his work will also find recognition. The reader who has followed this story so far, and who may be interested to hear of this highest achievement of Karl's work will find in the attached paper No. 240 which is attached to this story. It bears the title

A SUMMARY OF THE AUTHOR'S THOUGHTS
AND FINDINGS

The End

L I S T

of all the Issues of the Semantography-Blissymbolics Series attached to this Story

- No. 240 A Summary of the Author's Thoughts and Findings
- No. 280 Universal pictorial Blissymbols for the international Traveller
- No. 283 I protest and I accuse!
- No. 303 To all Officers who intend to use pictorial Symbols
- No. 306 Pictorial Symbols and "Punch"