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SIR RICHARD PAGET ON SEMANTOGRAPHY

In order to grasp fully the impact and importance of Sir Richard Paget's comment on Semantography it is necessary to know what he wrote 20 years ago. Herebelow is an extract from his book

BABEL, OR THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF HUMAN SPEECH (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, London) 1930

"We are in the alarming position of having enormous control over the forces of nature, and very little reasoning power to guide our actions - in fact, very much like a lot of children playing with loaded guns. Man, it appears, is still handicapped by his...muddled way of thinking. May it not be that much of this unreasonable muddle is due to the simple fact that our symbols for thought - language - are not yet set in order: that in the matter of thought symbolism we are still much in the same state of confusion as the Romans were in their arithmetic? We should be horrified at the difficulty of multiplying MDCCIX by LVII: to the educated Roman it seemed natural and inevitable, but his arithmetical powers suffered in consequence.

Human thought requires an efficient method of symbolism such as no language yet supplies. If the keepers of our language maintain a die-hard attitude and succeed in preventing reasoned improvement the result will, I suggest, be that language will be less and less used for intellectual and rational purposes and relegated to an altogether inferior status as the symbol of sentiment and small talk. All accurate thinking will have to be carried out by means of some other symbolism like that of mathematics.

This idea is also not new...Leibnitz realized the need of a reformed symbolism and method of thought. He imagined a universal symbolism of thought which would be understood by all nations, and by which thought itself would become accurate and quantitative."

Sir Richard Paget on Semantography in a letter to the author.

"As a co-worker in the field of expressing human thought by pantomimic symbols I welcome the method of written symbols which Mr. C.K.Bliss has devised. They compare very closely with the pantomimic hand gestures which I am advocating for the early education of the born-deaf.

Mr. Bliss's "Semantography" may fairly claim to be the first attempt to realize Leibnitz's idea of "small figures in the place of words...for rendering our conceptions more real."

Sir Richard Paget is a Fellow of the Physical Society, a F.Inst.Physics, F.R.A.I., M.R.I., Hon. A.R.I.B.A., Hon. A.M.T.P.I., and author of the following books: HUMAN SPEECH, BABEL, THIS ENGLISH and other publications.