

English Meanings of Irish Names.

By W. J. K.

NOTHING is more fascinating to many persons than the meaning underlying a surname. The question "where did names come from, and how have they been given to families?" is often asked, but we can only surmise the origin although the question itself may interest us. An old rhyme says:—

"Men once were surnamed from their shape or estate,
(You all may from history worm it)
There was Lewis the Bulky, and Henry the Great,
John Lackland, and Peter the Hermit.
But now where the door-plates of Mist'ers and Dames
Are read, each so constantly varies
From the owner's trade, figure, and calling, surnames
Seem given by the rule of contraries."

A writer on this subject, many years ago, said the oldest and most natural names were those derived from complexion, or stature, as brown, white, black, long, short, fairhead, golightly, heavysides, etc. Many are from trades or employments as smith, wright, taylor, cook, gardiner, waller, capper, etc. Some are patronymics, as Richardson, Robertson, Robinson, Johnson, Harrison, Thompson, Wilson, etc.

Another class is from the place of birth as Garrick, Wilton, Bollingbroke, Eaton, Leeds, Teasdale, Thorpe, East, West, etc. Still others are from offices of dignities, as, King, Lord, Noble, Knight, Steward, Clark, Major. Some other surnames are from animals, vegetables, or utensils, as Swan, Crow, Dove, Bloom, Berry, Bullock, Bacon, Herring, Ash, Beech, Rose, Chambers, Kitchen. Astronomy and agriculture have added some, as Heaven, Moon, Star, Cloud, Fielder, Hedger, Ditcher, Close, Lane, etc. From colors we have White, Green, Red, (or Read) Blue, etc.

It is supposed surnames were introduced into England by the Normans. Doubtless every surname has a definite origin if we were able to trace them to their first connection. Of Irish names the following are given as the true meanings translated into English:—

MACNAMARA,	-	-	-	-	Son of a sea-hound.
MACMAHON,	-	-	-	-	Son of a bear.