

"turies. Not only all common speech, but science, "poetry itself—if thou consider it—is no other than a "right naming." Then again, the old philosophers thought a good deal of names; there were the several schools, and those of the "Nominalists" and "Realists,"—the first holding that all general ideas are but *names*, the other as strenuously insisting that ideas are the *essence of things*. The philological feud has been going on for centuries, and is none the nearer adjustment than when it began.

Do you still persist in asking, What's in a name? Put the question to yourself, Is your own patronymic nothing to you? Rather, is it not more interesting to you than any other vocal sound? Is it not, indeed, indissolubly connected with your hopes and fears, joys and sorrows,—nay, with your reputation and your very existence itself?

The fact is, a name is something to a man. To some, is it not a passport to fame and renown?—to others, a badge of shame and reproach? Who, then, will dispute the question, or dare to undervalue the little verbal adjunct to his existence,—his name? True, it is conferred, or rather imposed, upon him without consultation or consent; but, as it is in accordance with a custom which has received the sanction of law, there is no demurring against it. How could we get along in the world without names? What incessant confusion would take place as to who's who. Even the most insignificant waif of humanity, if without almost anything else, is sure to have a name given to him by his progenitor, or some benevolent philanthropist. Possibly, the name conferred upon the helpless one may savour of the circumstances or locality in which he was found, but the endowment lasts through life, and puts him permanently in the nominative case.

According to a classic motto,—*Bonum omen, bonum nomen*—a good name is a good omen; and Shakespeare affirms that,

"Good name in man or woman
Is the immediate jewel of their souls."

May we not, therefore, transpose the question before us, and put it thus: What is there not in a name? Since then it is the representative and inseparable associate of its possessor, is it not both natural and right that we should guard it from assault, and prize it more than gems and all precious metals? Had we no name, indeed, we should be worse off than Peter Schlemihl, who had no shadow, he having, it is said, sold it to the devil.

How should we become known to one another were we unable to call each other names? Thus much as to personal names.

Without names, what would become of our national archives, and the records of fame, our commerce,

our social and civil affairs? A name is therefore evidently a *sine qua non* in civilization. Even among the rudest tribes, it is not easy to imagine that names were not in vogue to designate persons as well as things; although it has been surmised that the ancient Scythians were like some of the tribes of the Wild Bushmen, nameless! Fortune, who is represented as being blind, has even sometimes determined questions of great moment by—name, an instance being that of a certain Spanish maiden who, because she was endowed with a poetic *name*, won the crown of France, over the rival charms of her more beautiful sister. Names renowned are towers of strength. Names are not merely nominal things; they possess a mystic power, and sometimes sway the destinies of empires. What a potent charm was enshrined in the name Napoleon to all France! What terror it carried to her beleaguered hostile hosts! Are names not mnemonics of ancient heroism and martial achievements? Those world-renowned names, Cæsar, Alexander, Philip of Macedon and Charlemagne?

The origin of names is, of course, coeval with the race. The primal pair had their proper names direct from the Creator; and Adam was divinely instructed to designate the lower orders of creation by name.

In the earliest ages, our patriarchal ancestors seem to have been content with a single name. It was when the Romans agreed with the Sabines that they should annex their names with their own, that what we call surnames commenced. The Romans, in process of time, multiplied their surnames to distinguish the particular branches of a family, to which they sometimes added a third to perpetuate the memory of some remarkable event, such as that of Africanus, assumed by Scipio, and Torquatus by Manlius. These three different kinds of names were severally distinguished by the terms, *nomen*, *cognomen*, and *agnomen*. The agnomen of the Romans was imitated by other nations, including the English, for the race of their princes, as Edmund Ironside, William Rufus, Edward the Black Prince, Harold Barefoot, and in France, Louis le Débonnaire, etc.

Surnames began to be in general use in England during the reign of Edward the Confessor. The change in nomenclature then took place in populated and civilized European societies, and surnames became the hereditary (family) name. Thus, the baron was named after his estate; the commoner after some local or personal characteristic or craft. Proper, or personal, names may be said long since to have become common, since every Christian or civilized parent imposes upon his offspring an added or Christian name to that which is the family patronymic.

What name shall be given to the little local brevity that has just made his or her advent among us, is the question? Every new-comer, of course,