

Stories in Names

Your Signature May Tell You Where Your Forefathers Lived And What They Were.

It is by no means every man who knows that the name he bears may give an interesting and valuable clue to his ancestry.

Thus, if he signs himself Harcourt or Venables, Pelham or Percival, Daynay or Daubney, he can be sure that the founder of his family was cradled in Normandy, though whether he was a lord, a knight, or a scullion may be hidden from him. Similarly, if he bears the name of any town or village in England, of a certainty that village or town was the home of his forefathers.

Even when a man's surname throws no light on his place of origin, it often gives interesting clues to past history.

Thus, if he is called Tanner or Glover, Butcher or Baker, Carter or Carpenter, he knows what was the occupation followed by the first of his forefathers to bear the label.

The Thirteen "Richardsons."

Similarly, the first Thwaytes was a feller of wood; Jenner was a joiner; Milner, a miller; Webster, a weaver; Barker, a tanner; Lorimer, a maker of bits and spurs; Stringer, a man who made bow-strings; Tipper, who tipped arrows; Fletcher, who affixed the feathers; and so on through the list of old time trades.

When there was no such way of distinguishing a man it was an easy matter to identify him as his father's son. And when, in process of time, the "son" labels grew too painful and confusing, the father's name was modified in other ways—to such an extent, indeed, that the connection is often almost impossible to trace. Thus, the descendants of Richards to-day masquerade under thirteen disguises, from Richards to Dickson to Dickens and Hitchins.

Even names which suggest no desirable lineage are often both ancient and honorable. Mr. Buggins and Mr. Bangs will be relieved to find that their names came over with the Normans; while Mr. Snooks can point to Sevenoaks as the cradle of his family.

HOW HE REMEMBERED.

The absent-minded professor arrived home in a thoroughly soaked condition. "I forgot my umbrella, my dear," he exclaimed to his wife.

Surprised that he had even remembered about forgetting anything, his wife said: "When did you think of it?" The man of genius smiled with satisfaction. "Why, dear," he remarked, "when the rain stopped, and I attempted to put in down."

Wapping Old Stairs

Hit by bit old London vanishes. Quite recently alterations in the vicinity of Wapping Old Stairs, and the notorious Gravel-lane adjacent, obliterated the traces of the grim gallows once colloquially known as "Execution Dock," an appellation with a touch of irony that must have amused old-time seamen who knew it well for what it was.

Readers of the late Claude Lovat Fraser's little book on "Pirates" will recall several references to this queer landmark. Several of the panoplied pirates, whose quaint portraits he drew in approximately lurid colours, Wapping Old Stairs, swinging warningly, in chains, from the gaunt gallows that stood upon the bank by the inlet of the river at Bugsby's Hole, Wapping.

The adventurous "Cap'n Kidd (once Captain William Kidd, King's man, and commanding officer of a privateer) came by his end at Execution Dock on a bright May morning in 1701, and with him were executed at the same time half a dozen of his nefarious crew. They were hung, apart, in intervals down the riverside, where their remains, swinging in chains, were exposed for many years.

A wild, romantic tragedy-comedy by the Elizabethans, Heywood and Rowley, entitled "Fortune by Land and Sea" has a scene at Execution Dock, where two pirates, Purser and Clinton, suffer death by hanging. A particularly fine rhapsody by one of them is worthy of note. No doubt the public then deemed piracy a very venial offence.

Wapping Old Stairs played its part in crime with the adjacent gallows. From the earliest times it was shunned by all honest and nervous folk, though Dibble, it is conjectured, in an early effort centred a pseudo-nautical romance around it in the ballad called "Wapping Old Stairs." It is a maudlin piece of doggerel. Nevertheless, Wapping Old Stairs were long the haunt of cut-throats and vagabonds, and, not least, of that thieving band of river rats known as "Lumpers."

GOOD ADVICE, BUT HARD TO FOLLOW.

Doesn't pay to do much talking when You're mad enough to choke, Cause the word that stings the deep, Is the one that's never spoke; Let the other fellow wrangle till the storm has blown away Then he'll do a heap of thinking 'bout the things you didn't say.

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