

## NAMES, NICK-NAMES, NOMS-DE-PLUMES.

O Amos Cottle! Phœbus! what a name!

—Byron.

You nick-name God's creatures, you nick-name virtue,  
vice.

—Shakespeare.

A deed without a name.

Recent circumstances have conspired to render the "intellectual secretions" of a writer on this topic, extremely acrid. The persistency with which the much darned "Pinafore" is flouted in one's face; the consequent rejuvenescence of a certain congenial "Bab Ballad" whose hero was called *Bill* "because it was his name;" the appearance in a late issue of that rarity, a moral *Mail*, of a cowardly attack on University students by a man who lurked behind the ambush of anonymousness under the pseudonym of "Paterfamilias"; the ridiculous names that have been lately suggested for the Society's new buildings:—the discussion as to the origin of "WHITE AND BLUE;" and the University colors; and the much to be deprecated habit of affixing (in this paper already sufficiently Americanized in other respects) to the names of undergraduates therein mentioned, the ungainly caudal appendage of '81, '82, '83, etc., are all stimulants to the critic's pen. All are suggestive, and instructive. Is it not a fair surmise that when Southey wrote—

And last of all an Admiral came—  
A terrible man with a terrible name.

that he saw looming up before that prophetic poet's eye "which no calamity could darken," the form of the nautical-legal Sir Joseph Porter.

"One of the few, the immortal names,  
That were not born to die,—no, never!

Who would not like to impress the ten commandments upon *Paterfamilias*, and teach him that anonymousness, like infanciness, is to be used as a shield, not a dirk. What reader of the *WHITE AND BLUE* does not wish that its editors had not expressed their ignorance of whence its title is derived, and who is the guilty member of the staff who treats us to the unreasonable and unseasonable applications of '81, '82, '83? I pause for three replies.

While pausing let us dabble a little in literature, keeping however within the limits of our text. The subject of *noms de plume* has been rendered interesting to the writer of these presents by his recent brief association with a gentleman who was intimate with many of the brothers of the quill who acquired celebrity under assumed names. Perhaps some information gleaned from him may not be accessible to all, and may throw some light on "things not generally known." Just as some writers begin their works in the antique style, but gradually lapse into modern forms of expression, so some authors begin their literary career under an *alias*, but their individuality seems to become too strong for them, and they emerge from their mystery. Longfellow, for instance, wrote under the lugubrious title of "Joshua Coffin." Washington Irving gloriéd euphoniously in "Diedrich Knickerbocker." Thackeray chose "Michael Angelo Titmarsh," and Ruskin wrote as "A Graduate of Oxford." The "Historic" of the *Times* was Vernon Harcourt, "Father Prout" was F. S. Malony, and "George Sand" was Madame Dudevant in social circles. That Miss Bradton is now Mrs.

Maxwell is perhaps immaterial, for students never read light literature; but it is one's duty to go behind the scenes and discover in "Cuthbert Bede" the Rev. E. Bradley; in "Ouida," Louise De La Rame; in "Hans Breitmann," C. G. Leland; in "Josh Billings," Mr. A. W. Shaw; in "Max Adeler," Mr. C. H. Clark; in "Mrs. Partington," Mr. B. P. Shillaler; in "Artemus Ward," Mr. C. F. Browne, and our maiden undergraduates and freshmen will welcome Miss Harriette Parr under the garb of "Holme Lee," and Miss Charlotte Tucker will wile away their childhood's hours as A. L. O. E. Mr. Clemens would rightly think that there were other "Innocents Abroad" than freshmen, if we even hinted that any one knew not who "Mark Twain" is. Who the Dickens was Boz was a frequent conundrum of many years ago, and no doubt it was an astonishment to not a few, the discovery that "Boz" himself was the Dickens. But it is time to leave these creative *conféres de la plume*; having partaken of the substantial we must betake ourselves to trifle, and come nearer home for our inspiration.

No one who consults a dictionary, or a brilliant modern conversationalist (who is a walking dictionary), can doubt but that as regards Name there is a great deal of it, and go one but Shakespeare doubted that there is a great deal in it. Some give a halo to their name, to others their name lends a halo. If we may be indulged in distorting another quotation:

"Good name, in man and woman, dear my Lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls."

And of one, at least, it was said, "He used no other weapon but his name." A name is a little thing—granted—yet we are informed on the best authority that a baby also is a little thing, and a constable was once a baby; a serpent's fang is a little thing, but death is its victory; a word is a little thing, yet one word has been many a man's destiny for good or for evil; life itself is but a little thing—one breath less, then comes the funeral. We must involuntarily infer what sort of an epic poem a man named Timothy would write: And Sterne humorously exhorts all godfathers not "to Nicodemus a man into nothing." It is to be hoped that parents and *parvains* will be impressed with the responsibility under which they labour at the ceremonial of baptism. Beware lest ye indulge any eccentric tastes, and dub your offspring or your namesakes with cacophonous names. Even a baby will turn. Beware lest ye, through hero-worship, or pecuniary expectations, literally *cross* your children with some name which is a mythological relic, or some surname of a moribund relative made a Christian name by Mammon's transmuting power. Hath not Sam. Toronto said, "All cross babies shall be squealed!" Whimsical names have a great influence upon characters. Do not make your sons the victims of caprice, even though it be the caprice of great men. Remember that there is an unwritten side even to the calm majesty of great men. "Alex. the autograph of all the Russias" is indeed familiar to you through the writings of that estimable lady, Mrs. Malaprop; but perhaps few hero-worshippers have ever dreamed of St. Augustine at a barber's being called "Gus" by his "cullid" tonsor; few think of St. Peter with a bad cold; few dream of John Knox running in a sack-

race, and only the facetious can conjure up St. Chrysostom at a dentist's having his mouth (like the young ladies' mouths of the present age) made worth its weight in gold. Of course John A. could not be called Jack, but his political rival is not unfrequently abbreviated to Alex. Ned Hanlan, if you will, but *Ned Blake*, never! Fred Plaisted if you like, but Fred Manly, never! Edward Blake, Fitzpayne Manly—nothing less! We could not think of Jack Bright or Bill Gladstone, or Dan Deronda, but perhaps these names are as familiar to these celebrities' intimates as Ben Disraeli and Ben Lomond doubtless are to convivial conversationalists in the British Isles. There is a reflex action, too, for a great deal depends on character and circumstances. We could not think of Abraham's son as other than Isaac, nor Isaac's wife as other than Rebecca; but joined with the name of Sharpe Rebecca becomes Becky, and *she* is more appropriate than Isaac to Mrs. Partington's son, whose horse was so spirituous that it always went off on the decanter. Dick Deadeye would be nothing as Richard Defunct-Optic.

What's in a name is well exemplified in a witty little drama, "*Place aux dames*," where Shakespeare's heroines are made mortal; Mrs. Ophelia, for example, being torn to tatters in a passion at Lady Mac, who with Scotch persistency will call the melancholy Dane *Hamish*. Indeed one can scarcely imagine Orlando deifying any other name than that of Rosalind; the gentle beauty of Cordelia would lose all its charm were she called Miss C. Lear, and Portia as Mrs. Bassanio suggests a strong minded woman's righter. Of Regan, Goneril, Iago et *id genus omne*, it may safely be said that we can call them by no names worse than their own. How exquisite was Shakespeare's taste in names he makes us realize in almost every play. Take the question and reply in *Cymbeline* for instance—

Thy name? *Fidele*, Sir!—Thy name well fits thy faith.

Yet no doubt had his characters lived among us they would have shared the heritage of discontent and been dissatisfied with their own names as most of us are with ours. *Why is it* that we can not say to ourselves, and derive consolation from the thought, "a poor nomen, sir, an ill favored thing, sir, but our own?" and why is it that in other things than names some of us can not realize that self-dispraise is often affectation in disguise.

Although we have the authority of Camden that a similitude of names "doth kindle sparks of love and liking among mere strangers," yet a budding *litterateur*, who feels the sparks of genius within him glowing, but has the misfortune to have had a relative of the same name who was a great author, seldom can rise out of his ashes, and by no means appreciates this "similitude of names." What Charles Dickens could now become a Dickens like *the* Dickens? Let us suggest a remedy—Let him translate his name into some foreign tongue. He has a wide field of choice, and can adapt his name to the character of his book. In one language he may have the ruggedness of inextorable consonants, in another the softness of delicious vowels. Milton would not have advised the literary aspirant to go to the Scots for a name, for *he* thought their barbarous names symbolical of their natures, and