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CHANGE OF PATRONYMIC.

A recent number of the CANADA LAW JOURNAL draws attention to the present epidemic of name-changing among persons in Ontario—chiefly of foreign birth; and notes the lack of statute law in that Province to govern the practice.

Throughout the various States comprising the American Union, there is no such complete lack of statute law. On the contrary, many States possess a simple statutory procedure whereby, upon petition to a court, a single judge may in his discretion permit such change; and whereas, before the war, no undue or noticeable use was perhaps made of this procedure, yet since that date, the greatly increased number of applications filed has drawn public attention to the subject and called forth not a little newspaper comment, voicing many expressions of disapproval of the existing state of the law.

The origin and history of patronymics in England are well known.* For a long time after the Conquest patronymics or surnames were few in number and were confined to persons of distinction. As the population increased, the necessity of distinguishing one Thomas from another led one to be called Thomas Baker, because, perhaps, he was a baker by trade, and the other to be called Thomas Underhill, because he resided under (or close beside) the hill. Occupations, residence, physical peculiarities or even mere whim—all contributed in the choice of these surnames. Once the name was adopted, for some such adventitious reason, it soon became a patronymic. But a strong, and perhaps even the strongest, factor in fixing the surname was ancestry. From the earliest times recorded in human history, it would appear

*See Bardsley's *History of English Surnames*; Dudgeon's *Origin of Surnames*; Baring-Gould's *Famous Names and their Story*; 8 *Nelson's Encyc.* 386.