

Derivation of Names.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."—PROVERBS, XXII, 1.

1. The Name Van Sickle, as a personal and family name, it is sufficient to say of its orthography, that it is now generally spelled and written VAN SICKLE, and not VAN SICKLEN, *Vansicklen*, *Vansickles*, *Vansicklen*, *Vansicklin*, *Vansicklan*, *Vansickle*, *Vansickel*, *Vansyckel*, *Van Syckel*, *Van Syckle*, or *Van Sickell*, etc; yet, at the present time, some branches of the family retain some of the old forms of spelling and writing the name. It is found in old annals spelled VAN SICKLEN; and in old deeds, and also on old church records, it is spelled VAN SICKLEN and *Van Sicketen*. About the year 1757, the *n* and middle *e* were dropped on the old church record at Readington, New Jersey, and after that period it is spelled *Van Sickle*. In modern, as well as in ancient times, there have been changes in the orthography of surnames.

2. Derivation of the Name Van Sickle.—This name, without a doubt, originated in Holland; and might have originated by being given to a certain CLAN on account of being skillful farmers or agriculturists, who used the SICKLE as a reaper—an emblem of the husbandry, or a plentiful harvest; and hence, is derived from the utensil *sickle*, a reaping-hook, the sign of Ceres, the heathen goddess who presided over grain, the harvest, and agriculture in general. The prefix VAN is a title of distinction, meaning *of* or *from* a person's landed estates; and was probably prefixed to the name after becoming possessed of landed estates and manorial privileges,—VAN, front rank, or ranking first in any vocation; and hence, Van Sickles—first farmers or agriculturists.

3. Names of Persons.—Each individual is distinguished from his fellows only by *his name*. "Every name, no doubt, originally had a meaning, or was at first assumed or imposed from its real or supposed fitness, from some accidental circumstance, or from mere caprice." Originally the names of persons usually consisted of a single word; as in the Hebrew Genealogies, Levi, Aaron, etc. Among the Hebrews, the name given to a child generally originated in some circumstances of its birth; as *Jacob*, the supplanter. Sometimes a new name was taken upon some important change in life; as, *Abraham* for *Abram*. The Jews after accumulating a considerable stock of names, began to repeat them; and in the New Testament but few new names are found. The ancient Greeks bore a single name given by the father the tenth day after birth, which generally expressed some admirable quality; as, *Saphron*, wise. As Christianity prevailed, names from the Bible displaced the old heathen names; new ones were taken in baptism; and,

in some instances, whole companies were baptized with the same name, to save trouble. The names of the ancient Saxon population of England were nearly all descriptive of some quality of mind or body. Thus, Alfred is all-peace; Edward, truth-keeper; Edmund, truth-mouth; etc. Some names have become great favorites; and some much used at particular periods have afterwards become very uncommon; as, Rynear, Patience, Prudence, Faithful, Thankful, etc. There are only about fifty-three Christian, or given names of men, that can be used without some appearance of singularity, of which thirty-two are taken from the Bible. Of these there are twenty-five of Hebrew origin; nineteen are derived from the dialects of Western Europe; five from the Greek, and four from the Latin. Out of the whole there are twelve more in use than any others; these are John, James, George, Charles, Henry, Edward, Thomas, Robert, Francis, Richard, Samuel, and William. It has been customary in all ages to name some of the children after their parents or grandparents, or both. Names once significant, lost their meaning, and were repeated in memory of those who had borne them; and as many persons bore the same name, some other distinction became necessary; and hence the

4. Origin of Surnames.—(Given names (or Christian names, which are those now given in baptism) have been employed by all nations from remote antiquity to the present time. "Surnames originated later in life, after the character and habits of the individual had been formed, and after he had engaged in some permanent occupation, trade or pursuit. They were given by the community in which he dwelt,—by enemies as well as friends,"—for honor or dishonor. Many influences united to introduce them; and they may be traced to several chief sources. The origin and signification of surnames can be traced in very many cases; although some meanings have become obscure, being derived from words now obsolete. Everywhere the nobility had surnames, or family names, before the commoners, which were derived from the districts in which they lived, and were conferred upon the nobles in connection with their feudal relations. Another class of surnames are those of locality, which are more numerous than the sum of all others; these are either derived from places of generic names, as Hill, Dale, Cliff, etc., or from some specific place. Thus, ATMORE is from *at* and *moor*; APPELEGATE, from *garth*, an orchard; Byfield, Underhill; WADDELL, or *Waddle*, from a place in Scotland by the name of *Wear-dale*; VAN DYKE, from the dikes in Holland; VAN EYCK, from the village of Eyck; etc. To this class belong most English names beginning with the French *de*, which retain the name of the old home in Normandy; such names as Burgoyne, from Burgundy; etc. The progenitor of the Washingtons was WILLIAM DE HURTBURN; his Norman or given name of William points out his national descent—William of Normandy—and the surname of DE HURTBURN was taken from the village of Hurtburn of which he was in possession. In 1183 William de Hurtburn exchanged his village of Hurtburn for the manor and village of Wessyngton. "The family changed its surname with the estate, and thence forward assumed that of De Wessyngton." "By degrees the seignorial sign of *de* disappeared from before the family surname, which also varied from Wessyngton to Wassington, Washington, and finally to Washington." With those of locality may be classed names from the signs of houses, as Thomas at the Dolphin, George at the white house, etc., afterwards becoming hereditary, and dropping, for convenience, the connecting words. Such surnames as Fox, Lyon, Beaver, Hawk, Raven, Crow, Heron, etc., are either local, or have been taken from devices on shields, or derived from some quality or nature of the bird or beast after which they were named. Among the common people, many surnames originated in office or occupation and trades; such as Chamberlain (William the Chamberlain), Smith, Miller, Barber, Fisher, Weaver, Baker, etc. Thus *John*, the Squire, became JOHN SQUIRE; *John*, the baker, became JOHN BAKER. The most notable name of occupation is that of *Smith*, from the Anglo-Saxon *smitan*, to smite, and was originally of much wider meaning than now, including masons, carpenters, wheelwrights, and smiters in general. Many names of this class have the Anglo-Saxon feminine termination, as Baxter or Bagster, the feminine of baker; Webster, of Webber or weaver. Spencer is from *dis-*

pensator or steward; Venator, the *hunter*; Grosvenor from *gros veneur*, grand huntsman. The termination *ward*, indicates a keeper, as Durward, doorkeeper; Hayward, keeper of the town cattle; Woodward, forest keeper. Sometimes striking peculiarities or personal characteristics have given origin to surnames, which have descended to the posterity of those on whom they were bestowed; such as Long, Short, Swift, Paulus (little), Calvus (bald), Gray, Good, Wise, White, Black, Brown, Read (Reed or Reid) the old spelling of red; Duff (Welsh for black), Gough (red), etc. Some surnames are derived from birds, beasts, utensils, trader's signs, heraldic charges, etc., etc., etc. Probably one of the oldest methods of forming surnames was by adding the word *son*, or a similar termination, to the father's given name; hence, originated many Danish, English, and German names which end in *son*, as Johnson, Hutchinson, Williamson, etc. Thus, *John*, the son of Dick, became JOHN DICKSON. In later times the patronymic syllable was dropped, and the father's name was taken without alteration as a surname. Thus many originally Christian names, have become surnames. Many of the Celtic and Teutonic surnames were derived from God; as Godwin, Gottfried; others from fabled spirits or elves, as Elfric (elf king). As early as the year 804, is found among the Saxons, Egbert Edgaring, *ing* denoting descent; and to this origin are attributed such names as Dering, Browning, etc.*

***Remarks on Names.**—Among the early Greeks, with the exception of a few families at Athens and Sparta, there were no family names. Among the later Greeks the eldest son generally bore the name of his paternal grandfather, and the confusion arising from the repetition of the same name was generally relieved by appending the father's name, or giving the place of birth, the occupation, or a nickname. This did not, however, amount to a regular system of surnames. The Romans had a very complete system of nomenclature; and their names were less dignified in their origin than those of the Greeks. Some were derived from ordinary employments, as *Porcius*, swineherd; some from personal peculiarities, as *Naso*, long-nosed. The Roman commonwealth was divided into clans called *gentes*, each of which was sub-divided into families. Thus in the *gens* Cornelia were included the families of Cinnæ, Lentuli, Scipiones and others. Each citizen bore three names; the *nomen*, which marked the gens or clan; the *cognomen*, which marked the family; and the *prænomen*, which distinguished the individual. The prænomen, like all given names, was always placed first, and was commonly indicated by an initial, which invariably indicated one name; thus, C. always meant Caius; P., Publius; M., Marcus. The nomen was second; as, C. Julius, for the Julian gens or clan. The cognomen came last; as, M. Tullius Cicero. Thus, in the name of M. Tullius Cicero, M. is the prænomen, distinguishing him from his brother Quintus; Tullius, the nomen, distinguishing the gens or clan; and the cognomen, Cicero, which shows the family. Also, Publius Cornelius Scipio belonged to the Cornelian gens or clan and the family of the Scipiones, while Publius was his individual, or what we now call Christian name. Sometimes an *agnomen* or fourth name, was given, generally in honor of some military achievement; as, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus. The agnomen, being a distinction of honor, was carefully preserved by the children; and a decree of the Senate granted to the elder Drusus and to his posterity the title Germanicus. In common intercourse the prænomen and cognomen were used without the nomen; as C. Caesar, for C. Julius Caesar. There were only about thirty recognized prænomens. The ruder population of Northern Europe continued to use a single name. Among the Celtic and German nations each person was denoted by one word. Among the ancient Hebrews; the names of Aaron, David, Solomon, etc., were employed individually and singly. In the other nations which preceded European civilization, the same feature is to be observed. One word denoted one person in Egypt, Syria and Persia; Among the Saxons this primitive system was prevalent, not only where they were first established, but during the whole period when they held dominion in Britain. The names of Alfred, Edwin, Harold, etc., each signified a single individual. During the middle ages the Jews formed surnames with the Hebrew *ben* or Arabic *iben*, meaning son, as Solomon ben Gabriol, and Abraham iben Ezra. Prior to the Norman conquest (1066), surnames were not in general use in England, although some appear in the Saxon records; while in some instances, surnames are known to have been assumed before that period but they did not become general in England until two or three centuries later. "The custom of surnames was brought from France in Edward the Confessor's time, about fifty years before the Conquest; but did not become universally settled until some hundred years afterwards. At first they did not descend hereditarily on the family." About the middle of the twelfth century it was thought essential that persons of rank should bear a surname; and it became the custom among the Norman families of rank, to call themselves after their castles, estates, or fortified towns,—thus they introduced surnames; but it was not until some time afterwards that surnames were generally assumed by the common people; and, in later times, it became the prevailing custom for the sons to have surnames, which were usually derived from the locality in which they lived, or from the name of their own residence. "Thus the same person and family would have several names, derived from localities or habitations. They required 'a local habitation and a name' at the same time." After the reformation in England, the in-

roduction of parish registers contributed to give permanence to surnames; yet in the beginning of the eighteenth century many families were without them. Sons took their fathers' names first in the modified form of patronymics; thus, Priamides, son of Priam. Heraclides meant not only a son of Hercules, but also a descendant. It is said that a lady once objected to marrying a natural son of the king Henry I., because he had no surname; upon which the monarch gave his son the surname of *Fitz-Roy*; *fitz*, meaning a son, and being much used in England in the compound names of the illegitimate sons of kings and princes of the blood, is a corruption of *fits*, son. Hence we have Fitz Hugh, the son of Hugh; Fitz Randolph, the son of Randolph. The Russian *vitch*, as in Ivanovitch, has the same import. In Wales the surnominal adjunct *ap* was used in the same sense as *ben*, *iben*, *fitz*, *vitch*, etc.; as David ap Howell; and as late as the seventeenth century combinations were carried through several generations; so that a man carried his pedigree in his name; as Evan ap Griffith ap David ap Jenkins ap Hugh ap Morgan ap Owen. Sometimes, instead of any patronymic syllable, the father's name was taken in the possessive case, as Griffith William's, or as now written Williams; to which origin may be traced many names ending in *s*. The prefix *mac* was used in a similar manner by the Gallic inhabitants of Ireland and Scotland. The Irish also used *o* or *oy*, (signifying grandson, for the same purpose; as, O'Brien, O'Sullivan, etc. Occasionally when names are adopted by a family, they are transmitted without change from generation to generation; that is, the son inherits his father's name, which system prevails extensively throughout Europe. The present royal family of England has never adopted an unchangeable surname; while the same thing is true of many other distinguished houses, as those of Orleans, Nassau and Bourbon. In Spain the wife does not change her surname at marriage, and the son calls himself after one or both of his parents connecting the names with the conjunction *y*, as Pi y Margall. Surnames having been first an individual distinction, were retained by the children for the sake of the honor which they indicated. That which was originally a mark of rank was soon imitated and became general. The use of hereditary surnames was established in England about the middle of the fourteenth century, the system being consolidated by a statute of Henry V., requiring the name and description of the party to be exactly set forth in any writ or indenture. It was formerly usual in England to obtain a special act of Parliament to authorize a change of name, and subsequently to obtain a royal license; but legal authorities have decided that there is nothing in the law to prevent any one from changing his name as he may choose. The number of surnames now extant in England is about 40,000. In Scotland there are fewer in proportion to the population, certain names being remarkably frequent in particular localities, from the clansmen having taken the name of their chief. The names of the American Indians were generally significant; thus, Pocahontas, in English means a "Bright-Stream-between-two-Hills." Unlike civilized nations, the offspring of the Indians took the mother's name instead of that of the father. At the present day, the system of surnames, or personal nomenclature, is to have one name for the individual (which sometimes is double or treble) prefixed to another name which distinguishes the family to which he or she belongs. It is customary nearly all over the civilized world, at the present day, for the wife to relinquish her own surname, and take that of her husband.

"I breathe the dear and cherished name,
And long-lost scenes arise;
Life's glowing landscape spreads the same
The same Hope's kindling skies."

