

How Nicknames Happen

By AVIS GORDON VESTAL

"YES, we named him Machin, for his grandfather," said the fond young mother of the little tow-head by her side. "When he goes to school the boys will be sure to nickname him Match, and that would be horrid. We've forestalled them by nicknaming him Mac ourselves."

This was said once upon a time, so long ago that this handsome blonde lad has grown into a stalwart man. On Machin's first day of school the boys looked at him once, then, scorning all previous names or their fractions, they dubbed him Whitey. Whitey Sullivan he remains to this day to all save his disappointed mother.

Sullivan boy the second was christened Ray. "That's short and easy to say," the mother announced with renewed hope. Ray remained all safely through the grades and grammar school, then fond hopes were again shattered. This son became a star on the high school football team and because he did not "chew the rag" as the other fellows did, the stout quarterback once called him Silence. In a week the whole school knew him by this nickname and in a second week the nickname was nicknamed to Si and this form became Ray's used-name for keeps.

Now, wherefore must nicknames come into the world? Why must solid and substantial names sink into oblivion while new coinages usurp their places? It may seem like "putting the cart before the horse," but see first what a nickname is and then why it is so natural for us to bestow them.

A nickname, says the book of words, is derived from an ekename, for so it was said in the English spoken several centuries ago. Still earlier, this term was an ekename. Do you see the derivation? Eke means to piece or splice or fill out; to lengthen, complete or suit. Thus we say today, "He manages to eke out a living."

Very well, then, a nickname is a name which ekes out our other names and makes them more satisfactory. Being already rich in two to four names apiece, why should any of us need eke-names? John James Henderson Rivers, for instance, would seem to make any additional name superfluous.

Why? It is just an old story over again: nicknames are given today just as "handles" were given long ago when our nameless ancestors became named. When one said John, did he mean John, the son of James; John, the tallest man for miles around; John, who lived by the river; or John, who tilled the soil? To distinguish them there arose the appellations John Jamison, John Longfellow, John Rivers, and John Farmer.

Easy enough, you say. But consider. Custom fixed these names. Instead of meaning each individual man whom they suited, these designations came to be family names, as time went by. Surnames, or sire-names, were handed down from father to son, from son to grandson, and eventually to John James Henderson Rivers and to you and to me. The Mr. Rivers of today lives upon a prairie, far away from any stream. Mr. Jamison's own father was Jeremiah. Our friend Longfellow is short and plump. The descendant of the old English farmer is a physician.

SOMETIMES our family names suit us well, sometimes, as you have noticed, they cover us but poorly. Many persons, like Dr. Farmer, wear names that are misfits, bequeathed to them willy-nilly by those who are dead and gone.

Supplementing our hand-me-down fathers' names we have one or more "given" names bestowed upon us before our personal characteristics can be known. These gift names again, may be apt or not apt. Who can be sure that the infant Ernest will be an earnest man? Will baby Patricia develop into a dignified, patrician matron? Do you not know Lily's and Blanche's who are brunettes and Olive's with golden hair? Isaac's who are solemn and not laughing?

Being doubly or triply named without our own volition, and certainly without parental consultation of all the host of folk who will know us before we die, what follows? The public steps in, saying that our lawful names are out of fashion, of a style unbecoming to our peculiar personalities, or of a sound or length not pleasant to the ear and tongue of the speaker. In other words, instead of using our ready-made names, we must have new ones cut to order from our individual measurements. But, however, the patterns and trimmings of names may vary from generation to generation, we shall see, the weave of the material changes little.

When you went down the street yesterday, did you hear your neighbor address Mr. Farmer, who is a doctor? He called him Doctor, or, more likely Doc. Mr. Jamison is known to his friends as Sunny because of his contagious smile. Mr. Longfellow turns around if a voice shouts, "Stop there, Fatty." Mr. Rivers is Red Rivers to his cronies.

A very common source of nicknames is that of occupation. Just as our ancestors worked and earned for themselves, and gave to us a heritage the names Baker, Smith, Waggoner, Biermacher, Gardner, Fuller, Weaver, Webster, Carter, Fisher, Barber, Turner, Fowler, Miller, Hunter, Mason, Shepherd and hundreds of their kind, so, among the nicknames we hear today are Ice-wagon, for the fellow who fills our refrigerators; Prof. for the man teacher of almost any rank; Cap. for the leader of even civilian organizations; Butch, and so on to the end of the list.

Personal appearance or traits of character won for our forbears the cognomens, Long, Blue Jacket, Smiles, Young, Older, Elder, Wild, Goodenough, Brown, and others familiar to us. Among our acquaintance we recognize as nicknames of this class Carrots, Bricktop, Spotty, High Pockets, Hog,

Rusty, Sissy, Peg, Squeeze-'em-hard, Crip (cripple), Baldy, Bullhead, Rosebud, etc.

Place of residence laid its name upon the families of Hill Field, Meadows, London, Bank, Van Buren (from a town in Holland), Washington (from Wessington, in England), Monroe (Mont Roe, Ireland), and perhaps upon your distinguished relatives. Cut similarly to these are the help-out names Chinese Gordon (who won his fame as a general in a war there, Red River Mose, or Texas Tom. Nationality is related to place and we have families of French, Spain, England, and nicknames such as Dutch, Swede and Mexico.

Endearment is a motive leading us to give additional names to our children and to those we love. Thus Pet, Honey, Dearie, Babe (a name by which a grey-haired woman, the youngest of her family, is yet known to an entire village), Sonny, Laddie, Lassie, and names with a diminutive ending, as Sally and Willie, are common in family circles.

Terms of respect are bestowed upon those well known to us for their character or ability. In so new-naming the great and good, we feel more nearly drawn to them. They appear to be of a humanity like to our own and we deem ourselves more worthy of respect in honoring them. Father of His Country, Man of Sorrows, Martyr President, Maid of Orleans, are names to take off our hats to.

We must be lazy—or perhaps we talk so much that we have not the time to pronounce long words in their entirety—for we manufacture many nicknames by the curtailing of "real" names. Marguerite is called Margery, Madge, Margy, or Rita, as the fancy strikes us. Dorothy becomes Dora, Dotty or Dot. For stately Elizabeth we substitute Lizzie, Bessie, Beth, Lisbeth, or Betty. Andrew collapses into Andy and Ebenezer to Eb.

Derision or contempt is a frequent cause for re-naming, often unfairly, as witness the terms Sheeny and Dago when applied promiscuously to all Jews and Italians.

AMONG miscellaneous sources of nicknames are animals, plants or rocks, with which a person has at some time been vividly associated. Rank, business transactions, battle, charity and habits all have set their stamp upon the doer. Surnames of these origins are Drake, Brant, Wolf, Hogg, Bruin, Daw and Swan; Rose and Pease; Clay, Stone and Flint; King, Prince, Pope and Bishop; Purchase and Price; Pray, Crowder, and the like. With these things in mind we form Buffalo Bill, Cayuse Hank, Stonewall Jackson, Prosperity Robinson, Adversity Hume and Fighting Joe Hooker. Occasionally a friend of a family voices his protest against its children's christened names by addressing the youngsters according to their personal name-preferences. So a certain Penri was called Polly by an aunt who liked the Polly in "Polly Oliver's Problem" and a little boy, Granville, was Teddy to a neighbor.

A mispronunciation by a child of its own name in baby days may follow it through life as fond relatives adopt the little one's own version. A beautiful Maude in this way came by the name Nurdy.

Opposites may appeal to our imagination as humorous. In our town a rotund paper hanger is dubbed Slim, while his bean-pole rival is Fat.

Puzzles that keep us guessing while away many winter evenings. When in such a mood, decipher the causes for the nicknames in this hit-and-miss collection: Snapper, Dusty, Dinky, Buck, Friday, Mugsy, Scoops, 8 O'clock, Tinker, Snowball, Rare Old Bird, Perry-Miss-Plus, June, Jelly, Big Chief, Wien, Toots, Chuch, Chick, Rooster, P. L. Then make up a list of your own and try to beat the printed one.

Nicknames well known bring to mind famous rulers, authors, artists, soldiers, and scientists. The fathers of this, that and the other are legion. A few are: Herodotus (history), Chaucer (English poetry), Homer (song), Abraham (the faithful), Hippocrates (medicine), Joe Miller (jests), Isaac Walton (angling), and Satan (dies).

Queen Elizabeth of England was proud of the sobriquets Good Queen Bess and the Virgin Queen, but her sister Mary could scarcely have desired the title she so richly merited by persecuting her people, that of Bloody Mary. Their father, the eighth of the Henry's, was Bluff Hal. George the Third was Farmer George, while the next George was the First Gentleman of Europe.

The great Duke of Wellington, for his military prowess, won the nicknames Iron Duke and Achilles of England. The contradiction, Little Giant, designates the American Stephen A. Douglass, who was short of stature, but long on ability.

OUR presidents, being much in the public eye, have collected many sobriquets, respectful and otherwise, according to the political affiliations of the donors. Jefferson was the Sage of Monticello, indicative of his sagacity and of his residence; and also Long Tom. Madison wrote our constitution and is honored as its Father. Monroe, because he was the last of the executives to wear the formerly stylish cocked hat, is Last Cocked Hat.

Old Man Eloquent, for J. Q. Adams, is self-explanatory. When Gen. Jackson came to fame and presidency, he accumulated a choice assortment of nicknames all indicative of his strength. The Creek Indians feared him as the hero of New Orleans, while his soldiers, admiring his endurance, said he was as tough as hickory and spread his renown as Old Hickory.

Van Buren's enemies must have been largely responsible for his supplementary names, for they are Little Magician, Wizard of Kinderhook, Whiskey Van, Political

A New Series of Stories Starts Next Week

WE plan to give you next week the first of a series of short stories that come under the general title of "The Justifier." We've told you something about them already, promising you stories of absorbing interest. We feel certain that the stories will measure up to every promise and more. Their conception is unique. The writer creates a man who in his younger days was greatly wronged by business pirates and robbed of the fruits of a great invention. He sets about it later to acquire a fortune, and when he has acquired it, he uses it to bring justice down upon the men who robbed him. He does more—he sets himself up in the role of a "Justifier," to whom others appeal for justice, and in his sensational, outlaw way he undertakes to grant the appeal. He moves mysteriously, and when he moves he does so with startling results, amazing the world with his cunning and audacity. There is an abundance of adventure in the stories and also just enough of the other qualities of humor and pathos to relieve them of too much sombreness. The stories are by Fred White, a prominent English writer. While the stories form a series, each is distinct and complete, and may be read alone.

ONCE upon a time a prominent club invited a congressman-elect and his defeated rival to make addresses at its annual banquet. The latter spoke first. Two men among the members were astounded when they recognized in his wonderful oration eloquence borrowed from a prominent French orator. The whole club was astounded when the congressman-elect, who arrived after his rival had spoken, arose and gave almost word for word the same address. That is the interesting climax of a very interesting and humorous story told by John Richelsen in next week's magazine under the title, "With Cribbed Thunder."

"THE Color in the Blood" is a story based on that ever interesting question of the mixture of the races. It is by Lewis Worthington Smith, a writer of prominence and the author of several plays. The story is dramatic and strong throughout.

"WHEN Anastasia Was President" is a delightful little humorous story dealing with the activities of a woman's club. It was written by a woman, Elizabeth L. Stocking, and she ought to know whereof she writes. In addition there will be various special articles of vital interest in next week's number.

Grimalkin, Weasel, and Sweet Little Fellow.

Indian warfare brought Wm. Henry Harrison to prominence. The success of Tippecanoe lives in memory as his sobriquet. Hard Cider and Log Cabin were names showing his popularity among the frontiersmen of the then west.

Tyler and Polk have in turn been named Young Hickory, though the former was also called the Accidental President. Taylor was Old Rough and Ready or Old Buena Vista, in remembrance of his exploits in the Mexican war. Fillmore, from his personal appearance and careful dress, has been styled the American Louis Philippe. A mispronunciation of his name made Pierce, Purse, Buchanan was the Bachelor President, Old Buck, or Old Public Functionary, or Northern Man with Southern Principles. Lincoln is endeared to his nation as the Rail Splitter, Uncle Abe, Honest Abe, and Father Abraham. Sir Veto was Johnson, who used the veto power to an extent hitherto undreamed of. Unconditional Surrender, a phrase of his own, Hero of Appomattox, American Caesar, Old Three Stars, the sign of his rank, and the Silent President were one and all Ulysses S. Grant.

Those who believed Hayes to have been fraudulently elected, called him President de facto, and his rival for office, Tilden, President de jure. Garfield, the Canal Boy, from his youthful occupation, was also the Martyr President, the first of our lamentable assassinations, and the Teacher President, having been a college professor and president while still young. Arthur's Christian name, Chester, was shortened to the familiar Our Chet.

Cleveland rose to prominence so rapidly as to win the title Man of Destiny. Because Benj. Harrison's father had not attained the prominence of his own father, Tippecanoe, the second President Harrison has been ridiculously called the Son of His Grandfather. Backbone Ben was another

name, merited by his firmness. The Little Major was the murdered McKinley. The Rough Rider, or a picture of a big stick in a cartoon tell us that T. R. is meant. And Big Bill Taft! What a chance he now has to get nicknamed.

Says the man across the way, "My grandfather was a Knickerbocker in his youth, a Hoosier in his young manhood, and a Hawkeye when he died. Grandmother was a Buckeye, father is a Sucker, and so am I. What he meant was that his grandparent was born in New York, moved to Indiana, married an Ohio girl, and died in Iowa. His son lives in Illinois. The people of the states, taken collectively, appear to catch nicknames even as each of the inhabitants is likely to "take them" individually. Among such are Toothpicks (Ark.), Gun Flints (R. I.), Mud Heads (Tenn.), Beef Heads (Tex.), Tarheelers (N. C.), Clam Catchers (N. J.), Craw Thumpers (Md.), Egyptians (southern Ill.), and Tadpoles (Miss.).

Our national game of baseball is responsible for nicknames galore of teams and players. With them goes a vocabulary of slang peculiar to its devotees, but therefore widespread, for the ball fever is an epidemic from Maine to California, from the Rio Grande to the Canadian border, where it jumps the line. Who will bother to say the Cincinnati baseball team when he can say the Reds and mean the same? Giants and Cubs and White Sox appeal to the fan more than N. Y. Nationals, Chicago Nationals or Chicago Americans. Characteristics of the cities, their occupations, institutions, etc., show in such names as the Brewers, Lunatics, Gens, Millers, Senators, Angels, Cannibals, Pirates, Indians, Packers and a continually increasing list of others.

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