

Sybil held her lover's hand, and looked up at him with big, frightened blue eyes. Suddenly she gave a little cry of horror.

"Alan! Alan! What are you doing? You will die too!"

"I hope so," said Wyse fiercely. "But, my dearest, you shall not die if I can prevent it"; and he again applied his lips to the wound.

When the doctor came, half an hour later, he was puzzled, and presently took Wyse aside.

"She's little the worse for the bite," he said reassuringly. "There are none of the usual symptoms—such as numbness of the limbs and coldness of the extremities. A viper bite generally solidifies the blood; after a time the heart ceases to beat. She's had a slight shock to the system, but the poison doesn't seem to have done her much harm. Perhaps it wasn't a viper at all."

Wyse eagerly explained that the professor had probably exhausted all the viper's venom

for the time being. A careful examination of the dead snake's mouth showed that the channelled tooth with which the poison gland communicates had been broken off short, in all probability while the professor, with his customary disregard for the feelings of others, had been prodding the adder with a stick.

The professor's experiment had saved his daughter's life. Somehow, he has never written that last chapter of his great work, but is still revising the earlier portions. Wyse permits his father-in-law to dwell with him on the sole condition that if the professor wishes to experiment with snakes, he is to lock himself up with them in the garden tool-house, and bear the brunt of any mistakes which may happen. Consequently, the professor's ardour has died a natural death, and he declines to take any risks which might involve such an irreparable loss to science as his own premature decease.



PLACE NICKNAMES



LACES as well as individuals have their nicknames, and people have nicknames bestowed upon them not only individually, but by right of inheritance as natives of particular places. The custom of bestowing such began so long ago that the origin and meaning of many is lost sight of; and it is still being

continued, although modern attempts are commonly poor and unimaginative compared with those bestowed by our forefathers. In days when local peculiarities are fast being swept away, and English folk are rapidly amalgamating into a homogeneous mass, devoid of rough edges and specific character, the fashion

is scarcely likely to last long, and it is not uninteresting to glance at some of the chosen epithets, old and new.

Sometimes it is the qualities of the people which have gained the *sobriquet*; in others, the natural situation, geographical features, or local productions of the place originated them. Some are complimentary, and some are not.

"Silly Suffolk," "Witless Wilts," "Berkshire Dogs," "Hampshire Hogs," "Kentish Hogs," "Isle of Wight Calves," "Suffolk Dumplings," "Lincolnshire Louts" (or "Yellow-bellies," after the frogs which once haunted the marshes), and "Yorkshire Tykes" were generalisations arrived at in the first instance by the unfriendly outsider, in times when each man was jealous for his county and inimical

to his neighbour's. But, on the other hand, it is fair to conclude that Manchester in its own person set going the self-satisfied aphorism, "What Manchester" (sometimes "Lancashire") "thinks to-day, England thinks to-morrow," and the equally conceited assumption, "A Manchester man, a Liverpool gent, and a Birmingham chap." Yorkshiremen are commonly understood to have a fair opinion of their own astuteness, and may have given currency to the saying, "Give a Yorkshireman a halter, and he will find a horse"; but his enemies read another meaning into the boast, and vary the words to "Shake a bridle over a Yorkshireman's grave, and he'll rise and steal a horse." Another allusion to Yorkshire occurs in an ancient quatrain:—

"Oxford for learning,
London for wit,
Hull for fair women,
And York for a tit,"

the charms of the Hull ladies being long celebrated. Less flattering to the port on the Humber is the pious addition to the Litany by the Roundheads, "From Hull, Hell, and Halifax, good Lord, deliver us." To the Civil War times and the loyalty of those towns it is, at least generally, ascribed; but antiquaries give it an older derivation. In the fifteenth century, they tell us, when the woollen trade was started in Halifax, an Act was passed giving a separate gallows to the town for the punishment of those who stole cloth, and for no other crime. "The Halifax Gibbet" had hence an unenviable notoriety. What caused Hull to be likewise avoided, the Jonathan Oldbucks have not yet decided.

Certain Norfolk villages have fared no better than the counties already mentioned, and the old rhyme may be quoted as a sample of several fragments of local doggerel which have come down from the past:—

"Halvergate hares, Reedham rats,
Southwood swine, and Cantley cats,
Acle asses, Moulton mules,
Beighton bears, and Freethorpe fools."

There is a similar verse respecting certain Hampshire localities, but it is pretty evident that the ecclesiastical foundations rather than the towns themselves are in this case alluded to:—

"Romsey in the mud,
Southampton on the stones,
Winchester eats the meat,
And likewise picks the bones."

And it was probably a palmer of old who was the author of the curious lines respecting the abbeys of the eastern shires:—

"Ramsey the bounteous of gold and of fee,
Crowland as courteous as courteous may be;
Spalding the rich, Peterboro' the proud,
Sawtre, by the way, that poor Abbaye,
Gave more in one day
Than all they."

A Yorkshire village was the subject of the couplet—

"A thatched church, a wooden steeple,
A drunken parson, a wicked people."

While a Norfolk parish boasted the variation:—

"Hoveton Church with never a steeple,
Sickly parson, ungodly people."

In a Lancashire parish, and again in Hampshire, it becomes less offensive:—

"Poor parson, proud people,
Thatched church, and no steeple."

With regard to town nicknames, Scotland stands forth even more prominently than England; but it is the Scotia of the Lowlands, inhabited by the same race which in northern England has ever displayed a rough wit and a blunt, outspoken tongue. Possibly there is sufficient significance in the Gaelic nomenclature of Highland place-names—for those who understand it—to render further descriptive epithets needless; and the Sassenach finds it abundantly satisfying without the addition of qualifying adjectives other than his own.

If London has taken the place of Rome, the Mistress of the World, as the Metropolis of All Nations, is not the heart of Midlothian still more widely known as the Modern Athens? Glasgow is St. Mungo's City, just as Durham is St. Cuthbert's; and Dublin and Cork are associated, though less familiarly, with St. Patrick and St. Finbar respectively. "The Fair City of Perth" is matched by "The Brave Town of Aberdeen," yet more widely designated "The Granite City." Inverness is "The Key to the Highlands," and in every guide-book to that region is to be found the undeserved badge of Cockneydom, which impertinently labels lovely Oban "The Charing Cross of the Highlands."

The tourist, indeed, has to answer for many a high-sounding designation, invented to "boom" the localities, and set forth in the guide-books for his allurements. "The Garden of England" and "The Garden Isle," applied to the Isle of Wight, are older and better merited than most of these designations; the former, by the way, is the property also of the smiling valleys of Kent, a southern set-off to the "Fruitful Clydesdale" of the north. But the trail of the tourist is unmistakably over "The English Madeira" *sobriquet* of the Undercliff, and the "English Mentone" of Ventnor. Similarly we have "The English Switzerland" and "The English Pyrenees" in North Devon, a comparison which is not especially favourable to the locality inviting it, and likewise "The English Naples" (Weymouth), "The English Riviera" (both Ventnor and Torquay), "The Queen of the English

Riviera" and "The English Arcachon" (Bournemouth), "The English Etretat" (Cromer), and "The Montpellier of the North" (Southport). Scarborough more modestly proclaims herself "The Brighton of the North," and many people may be disposed to think that any compliment conveyed by the comparison is to Brighton's advantage, particularly when they recall the saying—

"Land without a tree,
Seaside without the sea,"

by which "The Queen of English Watering Places" has been defined.

Simpler still is the application of the alliterative adjective, responsible for "Sunny Southsea" and "Delightful Dover." Equally appropriate as regards sound, and yet more so as regards sense, there is much to recommend the variation, "Dear Dover." Following the same fashion, we might have Merry Margate, Elegant Eastbourne, Lovely Lowestoft, Imperial Ilfracombe, Winsome Whitby, Beautiful Bournemouth, Rollicking Ramsgate, and so on. Bournemouth is, however, abundantly provided with epithets, for, in addition to shining as an Anglican version of Arcachon, Mentone, and San Remo, she scores with better grace as "The Valley of Pines," "The Winter Garden of England," and "The Evergreen Valley."

Another Riviera claimant, Torquay, seeks fame likewise as "The Queen of Southern Watering Places;" Bath has a well-established reputation as "Queen of the West," while Brighton, not satisfied with her regal honours, poses also as "London-super-Mare." A distant competitor in this line is "Seven-Dials-on-Sea," the precise locality of which we will not mention. Great Yarmouth is suitably and affectionately designated "The Bloater Metropolis" and "Bloaterland;" and its quaint tree-planted quay, extreme flatness, and ancient and fishlike smell have given it the *sobriquet* of "The English Rotterdam." But it is not Norfolk, nor even the Fens of Lincolnshire, with their dykes and windmills, which constitute "The English Holland," that title being reserved for sleepy and low-lying Essex.

In the same county as Bloaterland is "Poppyland," "The Garden of Sleep," a slumberous agricultural district with grassy cliffs and flowery, ferny downs, of which Cromer is the metropolis; and around and about Cromer, too, is "Fernland," a name sometimes granted to Devonshire, while on the picturesque borders of Herefordshire and Wales is "The Golden Valley of the Dove." Similarly descriptive, but less alluring, is the appellation, now fairly ranking as a geographical definition, of the Walsall and Wednesbury

district as "The Black Country;" and to modern manufactures we owe also "Cottonopolis" (Manchester), "Ironopolis" (Middlesbrough), "Beeropolis" (Burton-on-Trent), and the like, all of them more artificial and less euphonious than the pithy picturesque-ness of "Periwinkle Port" (Southend). Reading is "Biscuit Town," Macclesfield, by more ancient right, "Gingerbread Town," Doncaster occasionally "Toffee-town;" but Banbury and Shrewsbury have to be content with their reputation for cakes without having gained any special *sobriquet* thereby.

"Proud Preston" and "Merry Carlisle" have become proverbial. Peterborough was in olden times "The Golden City;" Exeter took the name of "The Faithful City" from the motto "*Semper Fidelis*" bestowed upon it by Queen Elizabeth; and the same title has been affixed to Worcester, to which King Charles gave the motto, "*Civitas in bello et in pace fidelis*," and to Taunton, for its devotion to Monmouth. Exeter, again, is, or was, "Monks' Town," from the number of its religious houses; and Norwich has a double distinction as "The City of Churches" and "The City in an Orchard." St. Sennen in Cornwall is "The Church Town;" Coventry, "The City of Spires;" Oxford, "The City of Colleges;" Winchester used to be "the White City," from a mistaken translation, supported by its chalk soil, of its Celtic name, *Caer Gwent*.

Plymouth, Stonehouse, and Devonport are "The Three Towns" *par excellence*; Brightlingsea, offspring of Sandwich, is proclaimed on the mayoral badge "The beautiful daughter of a beautiful mother." Birmingham is dubbed "The Metropolis of the Midlands," and also "The Forward Town;" and in its turn has given nicknames to Pittsburgh ("The Birmingham of the States"), and St. Étienne ("The French Birmingham"). In contrast to "The Forward Town," we have the dead and buried one of Silchester, which appeals to popular as well as to antiquarian fancy as "The English Pompeii."

The list might easily be lengthened; or we might diverge to the names of rivers—the Divine Dee, the Crooked Dee, the Silver Thames, the Coaly Tyne, the Sullen Mole—or to such pleasant fancies as have christened the graceful spires of Lichfield "The Ladies of the Valley," and Bath Abbey Church, "The Lantern of England." But there remains space only to allude to the proverbial and prophetic repute which legend and rhyme have attached to certain towns. To take one example, "Lidford law" is the short shrift by which a man is "hung first and tried afterwards."