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# SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER.

T. W. WHITE, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

VOL. IV.

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# SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER.

VOL. IV.

RICHMOND, APRIL, 1838.

No. IV.

T. W. WHITE, *Editor and Proprietor.*

FIVE DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

## MR. JEFFERSON.

We feel it to be our duty to publish the following Review of an article in "The New York Review and Quarterly Church Journal," of March, 1837. The person to whom it relates has filled a large space in the eyes of his countrymen. The New York Review is conducted with no little ability, and makes a great figure in the Republic of Literature; and the Reviewer, who has taken up arms, in defence of Mr. Jefferson, against the attacks of the New York Review, appears to be a champion of no ordinary power. All together, the article comes commended to us in a manner, which does not permit us to deny the use of our columns—and it will probably attract a large share of the attention of our readers. We admit it to be somewhat *spicy* in its composition; but if the New York Reviewer should feel himself under any obligation to make a reply, we will cheerfully extend to him the hospitality of our house. Our columns are open to him; and they are at his service. The Editor of a Periodical like this is not at liberty to consult his own feelings, in what he excludes or admits: but having admitted such an article as the following, it is his duty to render justice by admitting a reply.

We mean not to play the Critic upon the two Reviewers. The attack and the defence are both before the public tribunal; and the reader must judge for himself. The reviews of Mr. Jefferson's moral principles and his intellectual character, will be reviewed in turn by the public. We mean not to decide between them. But there is one circumstance alleged by the New York Reviewer in relation to Mr. Jefferson, upon which we would offer a few explanatory remarks, though our own Reviewer has nearly exhausted the subject. It is a curious literary problem, whether Mr. Jefferson in preparing his own Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, did not commit a plagiarism upon the Declaration of Independence adopted at Mecklenburg, North Carolina, on the 20th May, 1775. It has already given rise to much discussion. Mr. Joseph Seawell Jones of North Carolina has made it the theme of some severe strictures on the Virginia politician. Mr. Tucker, in his "Life of Thomas Jefferson," has defended him against the charge of plagiarism. And the New York Reviewer, in reviewing Mr. Tucker's work, has attempted to refute the Biographer, and to bring back the charges, with other cases of plagiarism, home to Mr. Jefferson. Our own Reviewer has gallantly stepped forward to defend the memory of Mr. Jefferson; and brought up for that purpose a contemporaneous piece of history, which had entirely escaped the researches, both of Mr. Tucker and his Reviewer. But our Reviewer himself has dropped two links in the chain of proofs, which we beg leave to supply.

The charge consists in Mr. Jefferson's borrowing from the Mecklenburg Declaration *four* phrases for his own. We believe this is the amount of the alleged plagiarism.

These phrases are, "dissolve the political bands which have connected"—"absolve from all allegiance to the British crown"—"are, and of right ought to be"—"pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."—We do not adopt Professor Tucker's theory, that the extant copy of the Mecklenburg Declaration is so far spurious, that the compiler of it borrowed from Mr. Jefferson's draft these parallel phrases and interpolated them into the Mecklenburg copy. We are willing to admit the present Mecklenburg copy to be as it was at first written, and we entirely dissent from Professor Tucker's account of the changes and interpolations which he has assigned to that copy. But is Mr. Jefferson, then, the plagiarist? Certainly not, of the three first phrases, and from the Mecklenburg copy.—Mr. Jefferson's copy was drawn out by the resolution of Mr. Richard Henry Lee, as quoted by our Reviewer. That resolution was founded on the resolution of the Virginia Convention of May 15, 1776, instructing their Delegates in General Congress "to propose to that respectable body, to declare the United Colonies, free and independent States." Richard Henry Lee, as one of their Delegates, moved the resolution, as quoted by our Reviewer. The Committee was then appointed by Congress to draft the Declaration; and it fell to Mr. Jefferson, as one of the Committee, to make the original draft, and report to the Committee. When reported, it underwent several alterations. It was then reported to Congress itself, and adopted by that body on the 4th July, 1776. Now, the following facts appear, from a comparison of these several documents: 1st. That the phrase "absolved from all allegiance to the crown," is in the original resolution: 2nd. That this same phrase, as well as the phrase "are, and of right ought to be," are found in Mr. Lee's resolution: and, 3dly. That the other phrase, "dissolve the political bands which have connected," is also to be found in this form in Mr. Lee's resolution, "all political connexion, &c. &c. is and ought to be totally dissolved:" and, 4thly. That even these phrases were not adopted by Mr. Jefferson in his original draft, but that they were interpolated by the Committee itself, to whom he reported;—for, they were introduced subsequently to the report, in the following form, the words thrown in by the Committee being in italics: "That these United Colonies are *and of right ought to be*, free and independent States; *that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connexion between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be totally dissolved.*"—As to the last of the four parallel phrases, we cannot trace them to any other document. In the Mecklenburg Declaration, the phrase stood, "to the maintenance of which independence we solemnly pledge to each other our mutual co-operation, our lives, our fortunes and our most sacred honor." In Mr. Jefferson's Declaration, it ran, "and for the support of this Declaration [with a firm reliance on Divine Providence,] we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." [The words in brackets were

## NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA.

Lines written on seeing a picture of Napoleon Bonaparte, standing alone, just after sunset, on one of the cliffs of St. Helena, gazing in a pensive mood on the wide waste of waters before him.

Napoleon! Child of Destiny! What train  
Of agonizing thought employs thy brain,  
As o'er the Atlantic wave, with down-cast eye,  
And thoughtful brow, thou look'st despondingly?  
Does hope of conquest still within thee live?  
Or o'er thy fallen fortunes dost thou grieve?  
Thy thoughts seem fixed, amid the twilight's gloom,  
On other days, perchance, or on the doom,  
That war's uncertain chance, and England's hate,  
Or the unchangeable decree of fate,  
Has brought on thee. And dost thou seek some balm,  
The fever of thy o'erwrought brain to calm?  
Art thou at last convinced there is a God  
Who rules earth's countless nations with his rod;  
Protects the meek; exalts the lowly born;  
And sinks the proud beneath the poor they scorn?  
Or dost thou still on fickle chance rely?  
On changeless fate, and blindfold destiny?  
And dost thou vainly hope again to see  
The star of fortune rise triumphantly  
From out the sea, and claim for thee that throne,  
Which thou, with empty boast, didst call thy own?  
—The Star of Austerlitz, that led thee on  
To fields, where thou thy blood-stained laurels won?  
Great chieftain, say, shall it rise no more,  
To call thee back from St. Helena's shore,  
And blind the nations with its dazzling beams?  
Vain hope! the envious clouds that round thee rise  
Have quenched its beams, nor shall thy wishful eyes,  
Ere see its light again flash on the sky,  
The sign and token sure of victory.  
Napoleon, say, can'st thou not penetrate  
The misty cloud, that darkly shrouds thy fate?  
Nor learn the moral of thy life; nor see  
Of fame, of wealth, of power, the vanity?  
Where has thy greatness fled? Where is thy crown?  
Where are the kings that trembled at thy frown?  
Has wisdom to thy soul no entrance found?  
Has conscience with its sting no power to wound?  
Dost thou remain, still haughty, stern and proud,  
As when before thee Europe's Sovereigns bowed?  
—When France with all its legions, ready stood,  
Battling for thee to shed its richest blood?  
Napoleon, say, hast thou not felt remorse,  
When backward gazing on thy heedless course?  
When on thy couch reclined at midnight hour,  
And reason o'er thy mind asserts her power,  
Do not the ghosts of men in battle slain—  
Of millions slaughtered on the ensanguined plain,  
Thy boundless love of power to gratify,  
Full oft before thee rise reproachfully,  
And call for vengeance on that guilty head,  
For which so oft the innocent have bled?  
Proud man! thy thoughts were sad enough, I ween,  
As from the barren cliffs of St. Helene,  
Thou didst survey, heart-sick, the Atlantic wide,  
Around thee rolling still its briny tide.  
O'er those dark waves full well thou must have known,

Freighted with thee no ship would ere be blown,  
By summer gales. O'er that wide sea, gaze on,  
Gaze still with hopeless eye, Napoleon!  
No more shall Austria hear thy cannon's roar;  
No more o'er Alpine heights thy eagles soar;  
No more shall Gallia's hosts thy voice obey;  
Nor at thy feet her crown Hispania lay;  
No more for thee shall youthful warriors bleed;  
Or conquered hosts to thee for mercy plead.  
Thy sun has set—that sun, whose morning beam  
Made thee like more than mortal champion seem.  
Slowly it sinks behind the darkened west;  
The nations now from fear of thee may rest;  
The cliff whereon thou stand'st shall be thy grave,  
The sea-bird's cry—the murmur of the wave,  
Thy requiem shall sing along the shore,  
And Europe hear thy battle-cry no more.

## A TREATISE ON

## THE ART OF NAMING PLACES.

### INTRODUCTION.

An eminent writer having favored the readers of the *Literary Messenger* with some valuable hints upon the art of naming horses, I am encouraged by his example to submit a few suggestions on a kindred subject, but one of still more general interest—I mean the art of naming places. My design is, first, to show what is the prevailing practice in America; secondly, to point out its disadvantages; and thirdly, to propose a better method. In a country where new towns and townships, states and counties, are daily springing up, the practical importance of the subject I have chosen, needs no demonstration. To those ladies and gentlemen, in all parts of the union, but especially the new parts, who have votes or influence in naming villages or tracts of country, I respectfully inscribe my lucubrations—humbly soliciting a patient perusal before final judgment.

### CHAPTER I.

#### *American method of naming Places.*

There are three predominant methods of attaching names to places in the new states of America. The first, and perhaps most common, is to adopt names already appropriated in the older states. An impulse was given to this practice by the events of the revolution, or at least by the desire to perpetuate their memory. Thus the Lexington of Massachusetts propagated its title in Virginia, while Massachusetts, in its turn, received a Princeton from New-Jersey, and Kentucky borrowed both. It may well be questioned, whether the scenes of revolutionary conflict would not have been more truly honored by being left in undisturbed possession of their distinctive names, instead of losing their identity amidst a throng of honorary namesakes. Is it any compliment to Lexington or Princeton, that

the barbarous appendages "N. J." and "Mass." are absolutely needed, to preserve an ordinary letter from miscarriage?

A still more operative cause of this bad practice is the *amor patriæ* of settlers from the east. Springfield, Litchfield, and all the other fields of Massachusetts and Connecticut, are thus made to flourish in immortal youth, and may indulge the hope, that as the tide of emigration rolls towards the Pacific, they shall see their names emblazoned on the map beyond the Rocky Mountains. The only drawback is, that the old yankee towns themselves have stolen names, and must yield the honor to their prototypes in England.

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CHAP. II.

*Another Method.*

The second common mode of giving names, is to select them from the map of the old world. To one who has travelled through New-York, illustration is superfluous. Rome! Syracuse! Ithaca! Jericho! What can be more classical than "Rome, N. Y." These New-York-State Romans, if they ever have occasion to write or speak of the eternal city, are no doubt in the habit of employing the genuine American expression, "Rome, Italy." This is a mere conjecture; but we know full well that some American writers, when they mention the Tuileries or Garden of Plants, can find it in their hearts to say "Paris, France," for fear of confounding it with "Paris, Ky.!" What a commentary this upon the merits of the system! This practice is coeval with the settling of New-England. Almost all the names given by the Puritans to places, were taken from the Bible, or brought over from Great Britain. They had a right to pursue this method. They came hither by compulsion, and were fairly entitled to assimilate their new home to the old one as completely as they could, the rather as they could not then anticipate with certainty the growth of their adopted country, and had therefore no reason to expect any actual inconvenience from this kindly remembrance of the names of the old world. There is no such apology for him who travels westward, of free choice, and with his eyes wide open to the practical effects of this imitative nomenclature. What right has he to rob his native town of her good name, by a sort of theft, which nought enriches him, but makes her poor indeed?

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CHAP. III.

*Another Method.*

The third common method of naming places, is to name them after men. The page of history from which these are selected, depends upon the taste and prepossessions of the namers. The refined conception of immortalizing ancient writers, heroes and philosophers, by giving them a local habitation and a name upon our modern maps, has been confined in a great measure to the Empire State. Setting aside some partial imitations on a very small scale, New-York enjoys a glorious monopoly in this branch of the fine arts. The addition of "N. Y." is scarcely needed to prevent

mistakes, after such names as Ovid, Ulysses, or Camillus. May this proud distinction be perpetual! May no inferior member of the union ever trench upon the New-York patent for naming places by the aid of Ainsworth's Dictionary! A less sublime variety of this same method, is to choose the names of moderns, either foreign or indigenous, especially the latter, and particularly those of revolutionary heroes or distinguished politicians. No one could have quarrelled with this easy method of perpetuating worthy names, if it had been provided by agreement or by law, that no name should be given to a plurality of places. The *City of Washington* strikes foreigners as a noble title, having all the qualities of a good name, sonorous and significant, convenient and invested with sublime associations. But alas! we know better. To us, the name of Washington has lost its virtue—we cannot conjure with it. Instead of being consecrated as a national name, it has been debased by association with a thousand hamlets. How strange that emigrants and settlers should imagine they are doing honor to that memorable name, by adding another to the list of its misapplications! If this however, were the only instance of such inconvenient multiplication of a single name, we might be able to endure it, and to persuade ourselves that it evinced the strength of national attachment to the Father of his Country. But what shall we say of the hundreds upon hundreds of ignoble names, which are not only honored with a place upon the map, but with two, three, half a dozen or a dozen places? In this case, the public inconvenience, arising from a paucity of local names, is not, as in the other case, compensated by the value of the names themselves. We have not even this romantic consolation, when our letters miscarry, or come back to us with half-a-dozen superscriptions, half-a-dozen post-marks, and half-a-dozen postages.

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CHAP. IV.

*Disadvantage of these Methods.*

In enumerating these three methods, incidental mention has been made of some particular objections to which each is liable. The objections to the whole system may be reduced to these two heads: 1. Inconvenience. 2. Disgrace. Its inconvenience needs no proof to any one accustomed to write letters. So strong is the feeling of habitual confusion and dubiety, produced by the endless reproduction of the same names, that before long no man will be satisfied, without ensuring the safe passage of his letters, by specifying counties and townships as well as states. It is exceedingly uncomfortable to be always doubting of the whereabouts of every place you read of. Compare your own sensations when you read or hear of Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Columbia, Portsmouth, or any of the many *villes* and *burghs*, which are held as common stock by all the states. Compare the uncertainty, vexation and solicitude, the reference to gazetteers and maps or knowing friends, which all such names occasion—with the pleasant sense of certainty and clearness which accompany names that have been used but once—such as Savannah, Cincinnati, Natchez,

or Chicago. Compare our own condition in this respect, with that of Europe, where a duplicate name can scarcely be detected on the most minute of maps. Here is one great advantage on the side of the old countries; an advantage too, arising from their having had their origin in what we call "dark ages," as distinguished from our age of light. The old Goths and Gauls and Saxons neither knew nor cared about the names of other countries, and this happy ignorance compelled them to invent. Our settlers are just well enough instructed to be imitators, and ignorant enough to overlook the disadvantages of imitation. Some New-England emigrants may even be entitled to the credit of not knowing that the good old yankee names, which they are carting to the west, were not invented by the Pilgrims. If the force of prejudice and habit were once broken, an ordinary pedler from "down east," could manufacture new and striking names for places without stint or limit, every one of them better than an atlas full of *villes*, *burghs* and *tons*, [*Calhouns* and *Bentons*, *Jacksons* and *Marshalls*, *Clintons* and *Websters*, *Harrisons* and *Clays*.]

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CHAP. V.

*Another Disadvantage.*

The other disadvantage of the system ought to operate with power on the sensitive self-love of this vain nation. We may vapor as we will about native talent, American genius, an independent literature, and what not! We may rave till we are tired, of our annuals, and fourth of July speeches, and lyceums—it is still as clear as day that we have not even such a measure of invention as would enable us to name our towns and counties, without stealing from the map of Europe; nor taste enough to steal what is worth stealing; no, nor sense enough to consult our own convenience. If we have invention, taste, and common sense, let us begin to show it in our maps and road-books. This national infirmity has not been overlooked by our benignant neighbors. It has caught the eye both of satirists and sages. Witness the hundred *Warsaws* of Sam Slick, as an example from the first class, and the following extract from a work of Sir John Herschell, as an instance of the other. "Those who attach two senses to one word, or superadd a new meaning to an old one, act as absurdly as colonists who distribute themselves over the world, naming every place they come to by the names of those they have left, till all distinctions of geographical nomenclature are confounded, and till we are unable to decide whether an occurrence stated to have happened at Windsor, took place in Europe, America, or Australia."

This apparent poverty is rendered more disgraceful by its leading us to borrow from the very countries, which we profess to rival or surpass in all the qualities of intellect. If we are so wholly independent of Old England, let us prove it, and at the same time promote our own convenience, by disusing English names.—But this, belonging rather to the next ensuing topic, from which it will be needless to detain the reader, by any enlargement on the evil just exposed, the reality of which must be apparent to the mind, and painful to the feelings of all patriotic yankees.

CHAP. VI.

*A better Method proposed.*

It is not the object of this little treatise to expose an evil, without proposing remedies. To those who are convinced by the foregoing chapters, that the usual practice is both inconvenient and disgraceful, a method of correcting it will now be most respectfully submitted. The statement of this method will include several distinct propositions, any one of which may be adopted if the others are disliked; while at the same time there is nothing to forbid a simultaneous execution of them all. My first proposition, then, is this: that where there is an Indian name, it be retained, in spite of all absurd and tasteless efforts to convert it into something with a *ville*, or *burgh* annexed. If this rational and easy course had been pursued, we should not be now pestered and disgraced by post-office equivoques and geographical double-entendres. Every body who has been in Europe knows that our Indian names of places are exceedingly admired; not merely for intrinsic beauty, which they sometimes want, but as original and dignified by their associations. Oh if our great commercial city could but wear again its fine old Indian title of nobility, instead of being nicknamed after a decayed, mouldering heap of houses in the north of England, preserved from oblivion, only by its splendid minster! After this place New-York is named, to all intents and purposes; although in historical strictness, it derived its title, not from the *city*, but the *duke* of York. The prefix *new*, is universally disgraceful; a provincial badge which ought to have been knocked off when we gained our independence. The rustic vulgarity, *York*, at which the smart *cits* laugh, is vastly better; but *Manhattan* would be infinitely, infinitely better. The Canadian *York* has now a name of its own; ought not our own *York* to possess one too? It is a matter of congratulation, that in naming our new states, so much good taste and judgment have been exercised. Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Arkansas, are names of which we all have reason to be proud. To the end of the civilized world, every educated person understands them, and admires them. This advantage is owing to the obvious fact, that the naming of a state falls into better hands than the naming of most towns and counties; but it proves, that among those concerned, there is discretion and good taste enough, if they were only used to some good purpose. Let those that have authority in this thing, be persuaded not to make themselves ridiculous, by sacrificing noble aboriginal names for paltry imitations and vile compounds. One great example of this folly has been given—not belonging to our own times except by sufferance. 'Tis this may be joined a small one of more recent date—one out of a thousand. A beautiful neighborhood in Pennsylvania, was once called *Nesháminy*: it is now called *Hartsville!* There is no weight in an objection sometimes urged to Indian names, that they are frequently uncouth and dissonant. Not to mention that this often seems so only at the first, and that even then, the most uncouth will bear comparison with many of our own domestic manufacture; there is no reason why an Indian name should not be slightly trimmed and softened, by throwing out a consonant or throwing in a vowel, before it is

ultimately fixed by usage. Such a process has actually taken place in most of our current Indian names. The object is, not to preserve the pure form of the Indian word, but to have an original, distinctive name. With such modifications as are here proposed, a noble list of names might be produced, intrinsically fine, and wholly free from the inconvenience and disgrace of being duplicates. A curious illustration of the difference between the two sorts of nomenclature here referred to, is afforded by the title of the celebrated railroad between New-York and Philadelphia. "Camden and Amboy" is unequivocal enough, when written as a compound. But separate the elements, and speak of Camden—you will instantly be asked, which Camden do you mean? Camden, S. C.? Camden, N. C.? Camden, Geo.? Camden, Del.? Camden, N. J.? Camden, N. Y.? Camden, Maine? or Camden, England? But speak of Amboy, and you will hear no question of the sort, unless a Jerseyman should ask whether you meant Perth Amboy or South Amboy; but these are mere fractions of an integer, on opposite sides of the same river, and do not therefore fall within the scope of this discussion.

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CHAP. VII.

*Another Method proposed.*

The method just proposed can be extensively adopted only in the newly settled regions of the country, and even there, it may be open to objection, in particular cases, which must be provided for. The second proposition, therefore, is, that names be given which are descriptive of some characteristic and distinctive feature of the places named, their site, or their environs. That this corrective may not engender the very evil it is meant to counteract, it is of great importance that the names, formed on this principle, should be drawn either from something wholly peculiar to the place in question, or something not likely to be chosen as the ground of a distinctive name in other places.—*Greenfield*, for example, as a distinctive name, is absolutely worthless. It must not, however, be inferred that, by this rule, no such name could be given, except to places which possess some extraordinary natural distinction, such as *Rockbridge* county in Virginia, so called from the famous natural bridge. A circumstance, not wonderful or striking in itself, may be sufficiently peculiar to suggest a local name. An overhanging cliff of reddish earth or stone, though not at all extraordinary, might be a good reason for calling the village near it *Redcliff*; nor is it at all likely, that, without direct piracy or plagiarism, more than one village would select such a name. In order to afford the widest scope for this suggestion, and reduce the chances of direct interference to the lowest point, it may be well to suggest the derivation of descriptive names, in certain cases, from other languages than English, though the latter should in general be preferred. *Tremont*, (from *tres montes*;) would have been a better name in some respects, than *Threehills* or *Threemountains*, and in all respects better than *Boston*, a name purloined from an old seaport in Lincolnshire; nor can it be imagined that *greenmountain* would have been more convenient

or agreeable than *Vermont* from the French *verd mont* or *verds monts*. It may not be extravagant to add, that, in the west, even Indian names might thus be made "to order;" some descriptive epithet being adopted, even though it had never figured as a proper name.

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CHAP. VIII.

*A third Method proposed.*

As a third expedient, may be recommended the imposition of commemorative names—commemorative either of events or persons. The latter species of commemoration it is true, has been the source of much of the confusion now existing. But why has it had this effect? Because the names selected have been those of persons generally known, and likely therefore to receive this honor from many different quarters at the same time. The evil has arisen from a foolish tendency to overlook local and peculiar circumstances, and give the preference to commonplace generalities. If, instead of desecrating some great names, by depriving them of individuality, and unduly honoring some small names in the same way, it had been the practice to call places by the names of founders, early settlers, local benefactors, or eminent inhabitants of any class, even though they might not be members of congress or heads of departments, our maps and gazetteers would have been more respectable. The reader can easily illustrate this remark by applying it to the place of his own residence, and those adjacent to it. It may be added that, besides the superior convenience of this method, it would be a valuable means of doing honor to a multitude of most deserving men, and of saving from oblivion a whole catalogue of names, far more worthy of remembrance than a moiety of those now scattered, with a niggardly profusion, over our territorial surface. As the object of this work is to suggest, and not to amplify, the only other necessary hint, in this connexion, is, that when the names of men are good enough to be distinguished in the way proposed, they are too good to be spoiled and made ridiculous by any sort of barbarous appendage. Who that has a particle of taste can waver between *Jacksonville* and *Jackson*? Even *Pittsburgh*, allowing for the force of habit and association, is less worthy of the place than the naked, ugly monosyllable, *PITT*, would have been. But, be this as it may, we have enough of *villes* and *burghs* already for a thousand years. The suffix *town*, is not so bad, except when it is frittered into *ton*; but the best and safest rule is to discard them all, and let the name, whether long or short, stand on its own bottom.

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CHAP. IX.

*A fourth Method proposed.*

As a last resort, where the foregoing methods are for any reason inexpedient, names may be invented. I remember to have seen in print, an ingenious mode of managing this sort of manufacture, so as to secure the two important points of euphony and originality. The plan proposed was to form two sets of tickets, one inscribed with consonants and one with vowels, and

