CHAPTER III

EARLY GOTHONIC PERSONAL NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS IN
BRITAIN

Early Alien Influence. As briefly recalled in the opening chapter, the Teutons ultimately overcame the Celts in the greater part of England, resulting in the various dialects of the Ænglisc tongue superseding the Cymric, and the perishing of the native names in England.

The population of England, during the Roman period, has been estimated at about 750,000,[1] and by the time of the Norman conquest it had doubled.[2] The increase, slow as it was, must not be put down entirely to the propagation of Cymry and Saxon, the inflow of other races had already commenced, adding to the population, and to the variety of our languages and our names.

Asser mentions that " Franci autem multi Frisones, Galli, Pagani, Britones et Scoti, Armorici ", both nobles and persons of low degree, submitted to the rule of Alfred (ninth century).[3] The Franks and Frisians were the principal merchants of Western Europe, and considerable commerce was carried on by them with the Anglo-Saxons, who required manufactured articles and technical workmanship, which could not be obtained in England. Another great factor in the introduction of alien names into Britain was the considerable religious intercourse, which commenced with the arrival of Augustine and his companions in A.D. 596, and was maintained largely by the activity of foreign monks. It is manifest, therefore, that in any extensive list of English names, even at this early date, some may be alien. The great influence of the Norsemen, who themselves brought Frisians to the country, will be mentioned towards the end of this chapter.

Anglo-Saxon Personal Names. The researches of Turner (1799–1852),[4] Kemble (1846), Birch (1885),[5] and Searle (1897) have provided foundation for an inquiry into the nature of Anglo-Saxon (Old English) personal names.[6]

[1] *British History*, by John Wade, 3rd ed., p. 6.
[2] *Rise and Progress of the English Constitution*, by Sir E. Creasy, 1907, p. 57. The author refers to various estimates of from a million to two millions.
[3] *De Rebus gestis Ælfredi.*
[4] *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, by Sharon Turner, 1852, 7th ed., vol. iii.
[5] *Cartularium Saxonicum*, by W. de G. Birch, 1885–93.
[6] In compiling these notes I have availed myself freely of the valuable observations on O.E. nomenclature made by Kemble, Turner, Searle, and Redin.

That the Anglo-Saxon parents gave names to their infants at birth or baptism is evidenced by several tenth-century charters, which record that the persons named had been so called by will of " their parents " from the cradle and " not from accident ".[1] Every one of these designations, like those of other Indo-European races, originally had a signification, sometimes personally descriptive, as Mucel " large " ; often metaphorical, as Æðelwulf " noble wolf " ; prophetic, as Eadwig " prosperity in war " ; or entirely fanciful, as Heahstan " lofty rock ". These names are not always translatable, owing to corruption, apocopation, or scribal error, and possibly, in some cases, to the language not being identifiable. A few examples, representative of many others, will illustrate the main characteristics of Old English names.

BOYS

Ælfred : *ælf*, m.f. " elf " ; *ræd*, m. " counsel ".
Beorhtwulf : *beorht*, adj. " noble " ; *wulf*, m. " wolf ".
Dunstan : *dunn*, adj. " brown " ; *stán*, m. " rock ".
Ceolmund : *céol*, m. " ship " ; *mund*, f. " protection ".
Eadric : *éad*, n. " prosperity " ; *rice*, adj. " rich ".
Hereberht : *here*, m. " army " ; *beorht*, adj. " bright ".
Leofsige : *léof*, adj. " beloved " ; *sige*, m. " victory ".
Osbeald : *ós*, m. " a god " ; *beald*, adj. " strong ".
Rædwine : *ræd*, m. " counsel " ; *wine*, m. " friend ".

GIRLS

Ælfgiva : *ælf*, m.f. " elf " ; *giefu*, f. " favour ".
Æðelswið : *æðel* " noble " ; *swið*, adj. " strong ".
Deorwynn : *deor*, adj. " dear " ; *wynn*, f. " delight ".
Gislðryð : *gisl*, m. " hostage " ; *ðryð*, f. " strength ".
Heahburh : *heah*, adj. " high " or " haughty " ; *burh*, f. " castle ".
Wulfðryð : *wulf*, m. " wolf " ; *ðryð*, f. " strength ".

There is no certainty about the translations; each element of a compound has often many meanings, so that a considerable range of significations may be found. Sometimes a sensible interpretation is not readily discovered, as Wulfstan " wolf-rock " or " wolf-stone ", and it is to be inferred that the idea conveyed by these compound names was of small importance.[2] Even slaves appear to have had figurative and flowery names, as, for instance, Sæðryð, which may be rendered " sea-power " or " glory " ; in fact, the bondmen appear to have retained fanciful appellations longer than their overlords.

[1] Brit. Mus., Cott. MS., Claud. B. vi, pp. 34, 62, etc. KCD., vol. v, Nos. 1164, 1215, " qui ab incunabulis suæ infantilitatis, non fortuitu sed uoluntate parentum, nomen accepit Wulfric."
[2] *English Place Name Society.*, vol. i, pt. i, p. 168. A. S. Ellis thought that a name like Bern-ulf was so constructed as to indicate a descent from the Bernings and the Ulfings (*Yorks. Arch. Journal*, 1878, vol. v, p. 291).

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