

THE SWARTWOUT CHRONICLES.

CHAPTER I.

FRISIAN ANCESTORS.

1338-1641.

IN the first ages of the world people were distinguished by names descriptive of their origin, appearance, traits of character, and by titles derived from imputed blessings of the Deity : Adam (red earth), Cain (gotten from the Lord), Laban (white), Esau (hairy), Jacob (supplanter), Solomon (peaceful), Jonathan (gift of Jehovah), Nehemiah (comfort of the Lord). Later such appellations were frequently bestowed without any consideration of their significance being accepted as denoting the individual's derivation, features, disposition, or attributes.

Surnames are so called because they were originally written above those first designating mankind. They were then used to denote the vocations, localities of residence, rank, or kinship of the persons bearing them : Faber (Latin, smith), Zimmerman (German, carpenter), Clinton (Dano-Norman, promontory-town), Amherst (Saxon, woodland-village), Sigsby (Anglo-Saxon, town of victory), Prescott (English, priest's cottage), Luther (German, renowned chief), Johnson (English, son of John). In England and France surnames became hereditary about the eleventh century. As family titles they have been perpetuated mainly by records of sale and purchase of property, by wills, and other instruments of writing.

In the middle ages the names of the seats of ancestral estates began also to be used to designate the families possessing them. The appellation Blackwood, derived from a forest-covered demesne in Scotland, has long been the title of a well-known family living in that part of Great Britain.

Six centuries ago the synonymous cognomen Swartwout (Blackwood) similarly originated from a densely-wooded manor lying in that part of Frisia or Northern Holland, now known as the district of Ferwerderadeel, in the