## THE DAILY EVENING TELEGRAPH-PHILADELPHIA, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1867.

## 100000 THE SMITH FAMILY.

A CHRONICLE FOR THE CURIOUS.

Few persons who have not happened to be curious and patient enough to make the necessary count, will be prepared for the statement that there are named, in the "New York Directory" for the year of grace 1866, not less than two thousand five hundred and twentytwo members of the Smith family. These being almost exclusively housekeepers, because the canvassers for the Directory have orders to make exceptions in favor of only such lodgers and boarders as are prominent in business, we have a basis from which we may arrive at a pretty accurate estimate of the aggregate number of Smiths. Estimating the average for families at five members each, we have the grand total of twelve thousand six hundred and ten in a single city. A fair estimate for the whole country, in turn, from this new starting point, would reveal the number of this single family as having reached about half a million in the United States alone. The diversity of the mode of spelling this name is worthy of remark. Two thousand and four of those mentioned in the directory spell their name "Smith," in the approved English style of orthography. Four hundred and forty-two spell it, in the more common German style, as "Schmidt." Eighty-one seem to have preferred to have it "Schmitt," while fifteen have abreviated it to "Schmid," and seven to "Smid," leaving seven more rejoicing in the more distinctive form and sound of "Schmitz." But, while this exhausts the number of the Tentonic fancies as to the orthography of the name, I have still to notice a portion of the family, scarcely deserving the degree of indulgence which we might be willing to grant to the German Smiths, who have corrupted the correct form to "Smyth," to the inevitable puzzling of their fellow-citizens of polite inclination as to the pronunciation of their name. There are sixty seven of these people mentioned in the Directory, while there are two who have carried the corruption even further than this-as if resolved to escape from the family association of the Smiths altogether-and authorized the namegatherers to put them down as "Smythe." One of these is a female, while the other is a gentleman very conspicuous of late in an official relation—so very conspicuous, indeed, that he will allow us to say pleasantly that we cannot help guessing that he may have lost some-

thing by not having the crowd of the "Smiths" to hide among-that is, if he is not inordinately fond of conspicuity and notoriety both. As his name now stands - "solitary and alone," as "Old Bullion" once self-vauntingly said in Congress-there is not the slightest chance for his escaping whatever responsi-bility attaches, rightfully or wrongfully, to his acts. But that being his own affair, we leave him and pass on to a comparison and a speculation or two which have interested our own thought, and may possibly interest that of our readers.

The number of Smiths spelling their names "Smith," recorded in the Directory for 1865, was one thousand seven hundred and liftyone, as against two thousand and four in 1866. The number of this family in this city in 1856, according to a statement in Arthur's "Etymological Dictionary," was about eighteen hundred. Supposing that his count was of the English "Smiths" exclusively, the nu-merical strength and glory of the family would seem to have declined between that date and 1865. But their strength of numbers was most probably given entire, which would indicate an increase, notwithstanding the fair inference that not a few of them fell in the late war, while, without doubt, the collectors of names found not a little difficulty in prosecuting their work during the war years, because of fears of the military draft, to which must be added the new fear of the internal revenue assessors, with whom the Directory collectors were constantly liable to be confounded. The number of people chronicled in the Directory for 1866, rejoicing in the distin-guished name of "John Smith," is one hundred and six. In proportion to the increase of the whole number of "Smiths," there ought to have been one hundred and sixty-one. so that there has been a falling off to the extent of thirty-five per cent. in the "Johns" of the family. How are we to account for this fact ? I am inclined to take that view of the case most creditable to the fathers of the Smith family. This would suppose that some of them had come to see that "confusion worse confounded" and great inconvenience had grown out of the custom of bestowing their name on their sons, and therefore that they had consented to forego an otherwise desirable expedient for perpetuating their whole name to posterity; for there is little room to doubt that selfishness, whether working consciously or not, generally controls in such cases, while taking the form of "family pride." But there is still another way in which this decrease in the number of John Smiths may be, at least in part, accounted for. There is a growing tendency for giving a middle name to children, and, if it is not given in baptism, young men are very much inclined to assume one. Any one curious on this subject will find the most striking evidence of the tendency referred to by comparing the names of the members of the present Congress of the United States with those of the members of the Continental Congress, or of the signers of the Declaration of American Independence. In the latter, middle names are very rare, while they are very numerous in the ranks of publie men at the present day, many of them not being contented with even two Christian names. This being the case as touching other names, the wonder is that, for distinction's sake, there should be an end put to the name of "John Smith," spite of the parental vanity already alluded to as one of the sources of its constant supply.

discoursed of thus:-"He doth nothing but talk of his horse, and can shoe him. I am atraid his mother played false with a smith." or common black smith.

Tate writes .---"Lawless, man the anvil dares profane. And 'orge that steel by which a man is slain, Which earth, at first, for ploughshares did afford.

Nor yet the smith had learned to form a

As showing the wider sense of the word, as applied to the makers or doers of anything,

Dryden has a couplet in point:-

The doves repented, though too late, Become the smiths of their own foolish fate." But Verstegan brings us directly to the origin of the name of Smith, as applied to persons rather than to their employments. Referring to the root, smitan, to smite, he deolares:-

From whence comes Smith, all be he knight

But from the smith that forges at the fire?" A brief statement of the high estimation in which smiths were held among the aucients will, no doubt, be acceptable to the Smith family. Therefore I will proceed to give this as preliminary to an attempt to trace both its

etymology and genealogy. As already hinted, the term "smith" was originally applied to artificers in wood as well as in metallic substances, in fact to all artisans. Hence the great frequency of the adoption of the name in all coun-tries. Among the Scottish Highlanders the smith ranked not less than third in dig-nity to the chief of the clan, because of his skill in making military weapons, and his dexterity in teaching the use of the same. In Wales there were formerly three sciences which a villein, or tenant, could not teach to his own child without an express license from his lord. These were classed as Scholarship, Bardism, and Smitheraft. The last named was one of the "liberal sciences," the term "smithcraft" having a much more comprehensive meaning than as now understood. For the smith then was expected to unite, in his single profession, different branches of knowledge now pursued separately, such as the mining, smelting, and working of the metal, as well as fashioning it into the forms desired after it was ready for use.

Arthur, in order to account for so great a frequency of the name of Smith, asserts "that the term, as a designation of handicraft, was applied originally to artificers in wood as well as metal-in fact, to all mechanical workmen." But I do not think this probables in view of the accepted significance of the term among all the peoples whose orthography I have already given on the highest authority, and which carries with it the idea of smiting, or striking, or beating, and not sawing, or planing, drawing, or splitting even.

From this view of the case we are safely brought to the etymological inference that the name of Smith was given to the original of the family by his neighbors because he followed the craft of a smith. Thus:-"John the smith" was so designated to distinguish the smith "Was so designated," "John the him from "John the shepherd," "John under the miller," "John the hunter," "John under the hill," "John the farmer," and so on, there being no other mode as yet for distinguishing so many persons subjected to the primitive Hebrew custom of having but one name-a custom growing out of the instinctively selfish disposition of fathers to prolong their personal identity through their sons, which Godwin, in his *Enquirer*, insists on considering as the mainspring of parental care, disinterested as manipring of parental care, disinterested as manipring generally are inclined to consider it, as shown by the com-mon expression, "parental love." In the course of time "John the smith" came to be called for observations and comparison to be called, for shortness and convenience, John Smith; just as "John the shepherd" became John Shepperd; "John the hunter," John Hunter; "John under the hill," John Under-hill; and so through the other examples I have supposed, and many others that will suggest themselves to readers curious enough to follow out this line of inference. So much for the origin of the family name of the Smiths. Now, a few words about the genealogy of the race of the Smiths, and the reason of their extensive diffusion throughout the kingdoms and principalities and powers of the world. One of the best things of this import we give on the authority of a writer in the Providence Journal, who once played the philologist with the name of Smith through some thirty columns (!) thereby proving it to be as "the harp of a thousand strings," and brought himself at length-to his own satisfaction, apparently, if nobody else's-to this conclusion, so far as there could be any conclusion -for he admits himself exhausted rather than his subject-that, "from what has been hitherto discovered, the great and formidable family of the Smiths are the veritable descendants, in a direct line, of Shem, the son of Noah, the father of the Shemitish tribe, or the tribe of Shem; and that it (that is, the name of Smith) is thus derived: Shem, Shemit, Shmit, Smith." Another newspaper writer, who found vent for his philological lore through the old Philadelphia Gazette, contended for the universality of the name of not only "Smith" without the "John," but "Smith" with the "John;" yes, John Smith himself-to individualize him, suppose-found as it is not only in Great Britain and North America, but among the people of "all the world and the rest of mankind," as President Taylor once said. He called attention gravely to the fact that the ancient Hebrews had no Christian names. In view of this, it were useless to seek for the eminently Christian first name of John Smith among the direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (I carry out the idea in my own words), and that, therefore, we must be satisfied with the deri-vation of the patronymic of "Smith" without the aforesaid Christian affix of "John," from the name of Shem or Shemit, as so satisfactorily made out above. And this we surely ought to be contented to do in John Smith's whalf, seeing that, among all the Christian nations-including those of pagan Greece and Rome-the John, with only some slight variations of orthography, to accommodate the musical taste of the owners of it, is in vogue, as demonstrated by the following catalogue:-Greek, Ioannos Smithos; Latin, Johannes Smithius; Italian, Giovanni Smithi; Spanlsh, Juan Smithus; Portuguese, Juan Smither Dutch, Hans Smidt; German, Johann Schmidt; French, Jean Smeets, Russlau, Jouloff Skmittowski; Polish, Ivan Schmithwieiski; Chinese, Shimmit; Icelandic, Jahne Smithe; Welsh, Jihon Semidid; Indian, Smith-a-mac; Ancient Mexican, Jonthe Smitters; and place English, John Smith. Not satisfied still with this most triumphant vindication of the name of Smith from the slurring imputation of being a mere vulgar modern one, the sugart on whose version I have slightly improved above states that among the cartouches deciphered by Rosellini on the temple of Osirls, in Egypt, was found the name of Smithosis (one of the Pharaohs or kings), being the ninth of the ancient Theban dynasty, and the founder of the cele-brated temple of "Smithopolis Magna."

name of the illustrious family under notice | the great family under notice were the scendants of some mere modern horses

But there can be no misapprehension the last-named point on the part of cl readers; for they know that the first b smith was no less a personage than Vulcan, who had the distinguished hom hammering, and that most effectually, the skull bones of the very father of the Jupiter himself, from which he released goddess of wirdom, Minerva; while with same stroke of his forge-hammer, which formed this wonderful feat in obstetric cured Jupiter of a most violent heada And, by the way, this smiting of the ON brain-box, commonly called "knowledge-b of the father of the gods, after all, makes original sphere of the blacksmith ar wider than the definitions of the left lexicographers above cited would to warrant. While contemplating distinguished personage just mentioned a original of the long line of craftsmen w designation furnished a name to the F family, it is difficult to understand any author so respectable as that of the mological Dictionary, above quoted, could his own consent to say slurringly and s ingly:-"We see, in the papers, that Smith dies, is married, hanged, drowned brutally murdered daily ! John Smith de identify any body, and therefore is no nam all;" and then to add that "this num family is the subject of many laughable dotes and witty sallies," whereof the foll is given as an example:-"A wag, on a o occasion, coming late to the theatre, and ing to get a seat, shouted, 'Mr. Smith's c ing is on fire!' The house was thinne stantly, at least five per cent., and the wi a choice of seats."

But the Smith family can afford to these vulgar jokes cracked at their experemembrance of the number of distingu persons that are or have been memb their ancient family, some of whom I pr to recount, as the conclusion of this my as follows:-There was William Smith classic author and translator of "Thucydi 'Longinus," etc.: Sydney Smith, the English divine and witty writer and t Alexander Smith, the poet; the bro James and Horace Smith, as among writers of distinction bearing the name last mentioned being particularly distingu as the author of "Rejected Addresses;" liam Smith, called the "father of geolo Charlotte Smith, the postess and not Elizabeth Smith, the noted linguist; Adam Smith, the great writer on po conomy; and further, as connected wi history of our own country, the family can point, first of all, to Smith himself, the adventurous Vin pioneer and protege of Pocahontas, about veracity as a historian the critics are so just now: and here in America, James S one of the signers of the Declaration of pendence; Elihu H. Smith, a distingu medical author of the last century; Smith, the founder of the Mormons; "I Smith, a Union General; Gustavus and Smith, of the Rebel army; Truman Smith Senator: Seba Smith, the comic writer; Smith, the philanthropist; and, lastly noted peripatetic "philosopher and frier the barber-dreaders, Henry Smith, the strop man, whose cry of "A few more the same sort!" is so appropriate to a moof a family only a few of whose distingu members I have mentioned in my catalo Such is the imperfect though well-int plea for the Smith family, which I tak liberty of dedicating to my particular f John Smith, whose Christian name I g italles, in order that there may be no mabout his personal identity .- Northern M

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I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not say this in disparagement of the name of "Smith," nor, in fact, of "Smith with the John." The plea for the name which I am about to offer will prove to the contrary. I now propose to trace out some of the

etymological and other facts relating to the Smith family. First, as to the origin of the name itself. This evidently was derived from the Saxon verb smilan, to strike or smile. Johnson's Dictionary, from about the earliest unabridged quarto editions of which I quote, derives the word thus:-"Saxon, smith; Ger-man, smeth; Dutch, smid. Definitions:-1. One who forges with his hammer; one who works in metals. 2. He who makes or effects anything."

Webster gives the following as the forms which this term presents in various languages: -"In Anglo-Saxon, smidh; Gothio, smitha; Old Friesic smeth; Low German and Dutch, smid; Danish and Swedish, amed; Icelandic, smidh; Old High German, suit and mid; New High German, schwied." His definitions are substantially copies of Johnson's, but specify, "fron-emith, gold-smith, silver-smith, and the like," thus confirming the history of the widely ranging significance of the term. His authorities are furnished by mere abbreviations of the citations of his English predecessor, as generally is the case in his dictionary. In one of Shakespeare's plays we find the

I join with Arthur in congratulating the Smith family on the result of these profound researches, which are admirably calculated to explode the generally received opinion that

