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The Smith Family



*Its Work and
Story*

*"The Smith a mighty man is he,
With open heart and hand"*

1932





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Preface.

With their customary modesty, the Smith Family did not write this little book themselves. They left it to somebody outside the organization, who was supplied with scrapbooks, annual reports, and documents for the purpose.

He has, of course, ended up as a Smith, and writes this little preface only to regret that his account has to be short and restricted. There are a thousand small activities of the Smiths unchronicled, a thousand good yarns untold.

The only consolation about it all is that a good story will always keep, and that as time goes on there will be more and more Smiths to write about and more and more of their good works to record.

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The Beginning of it.

IT began on the Parramatta Road ten years ago. The afternoon was sultry; the season was near Christmas and the five business men in the motor car were a little tired of their trip and looking forward to getting home.

They had exhausted the usual topics of conversation. They had discussed last week's cricket, and the weather, and the iniquity of the Government, and the badness of business, and there seemed to be very little else left to say anything about, when the jovial fellow in the corner remarked suddenly:

"My word, you should see the monkey I got for my youngsters for Christmas. It's a bonzer!"

Now, since everybody in the car was a responsible business man full of the seriousness of life, it was quite natural that this auspicious opening of an important subject should set every tongue going. It seemed that everybody aboard had been investing or planning to invest in the machinery of Christmas delight. So the talk which had subsided flared up again.

The merits of stick-climbing monkeys were canvassed against the benefits of Meccano. The new tri-cycle, which was to be sneaked into the house on padded wheels during the later hours of Christmas Eve, competed with the elephant who rolled his eyes. The present merged itself into the past and brought up a

train of reminiscences about time's changes and the Christmas adventures of other days when everybody present was a boy ; but the discussion being cut short by arrival at the "Woolpack," where it was proposed that the company should modestly fortify themselves to face the traffic on the road into the city and wash away the dust of Baulkham Hills, the jovial man who had started the conversation summed up :

"Ah, well !" said he, "it's a great thing to be a kid in these times. You may be hard up when you grow infirm and creaky like us old crocks, but there isn't a kid who hasn't got something to look forward to at Christmas !"

"I wonder ?" said the driver solemnly.

"Wonder what ?" asked the jovial man.

"Whether every kid has a good time at Christmas," replied the driver.

"Don't talk through your hat, man !" said the Jovial One. "I'll bet you there isn't a youngster in the blessed country who doesn't get a Christmas-box and have a little bit of plum pudding."

"I doubt it," retorted the driver—an argumentative cuss like all his ilk.

"Oh, rats !" shouted his opponent. "I bet you can't find anybody in this country who isn't looked after, you old pessimist. What are you boys having ?"

"Well, what about trying ?" asked the Driver.

The upshot of it all was that the Jovial Man, within two or three days, was feeling devoutly glad that he had agreed to join a committee of investigation instead of putting money on his opinion.

It was found, at once, that there was no difficulty in discovering not only small boys and girls, but large numbers of families to whom Christmas was only a name. There were institutions full of orphans who had never seen Santa Claus, for the simple reason that the funds with which they were supplied did not run to such luxuries. There was a place where the best the matron could do for fifty or sixty mites was to marshal them and lead in carol singing. There was another where the soft-hearted staff simulated the bounty of St. Nicholas by changing some of their own meagre shillings into pennies and dropping them down the chimney to be scrambled for by their charges.

"Something will have to be done about this!" muttered the Jovial Man when he heard the facts. And surely enough, something was done.



On Christmas Eve, 1922, half a dozen shamefaced males might have been seen getting out of a motor car at a Home for mentally deficient boys at Carlingford. Behind was another motor car loaded down with parcels. In front was the hall of the home in which, seated on forms, were forty small boys. The Jovial Man was present, quite unrecognisable as Santa Claus. The remainder of the party were bunched together with the look of people who were saying to themselves: "Now, why did we let ourselves in for a thing like this?"

Like most of those kindhearted people who do good in this world, they were painfully shy and self-conscious, and the spectacle of those forty small, stolid boys, washed and brushed and sitting open-mouthed, with a cynical look of unbelief on their faces, was not reassuring.

If there was some sign of animation among them as Santa walked grandly up the aisle, none of the visitors noticed it. What they saw before them most specifically was the open space which they were to occupy. It was even more exposed than the aisle, and all of them, during their progress, were experiencing something of the "gooseflesh sensation" that usually afflicts malefactors on their way to the scaffold.

They reached their place of prominence and looked down.

Santa Claus ranged himself with the matron, feeling for the moment very foolish in his robes and quite convinced that every small boy in that hall was suppressing his giggles at so ridiculous a sight.

He looked round the hall at that sea of uncompromising faces, and suddenly he saw a very small and very spindly youngster leave his seat in the back row. Having a thorough knowledge of the psychology of small boys, especially those who sit in back rows, he was naturally convinced that this one boded no good to him, and he felt himself breaking out into a cold perspiration.

Here that young monster came, sneaking up the aisle, his whole face speaking tension, his movements wary. Every step which he took made our potential Santa Claus more anxious. What was his little game?

He crept closer and closer.

He reached the platform. He put out his hand. He touched Santa Claus.

He let out a resounding whoop of glee which was echoed through the hall. The youngsters rose as one man and shrieked with delight. They stood up. They jumped on the forms. They yelled, and they yelled again, so that the visitors themselves felt inclined to yell with them.

Then it all came out. The small, creeping boy, a pathetic little figure whom experience had long since made into a sceptic, had been bent merely on discovering whether Santa Claus was real and not a myth. People who gave away something for nothing were completely outside his experience. But having once satisfied himself that he was actually face to face with the old man of the reindeer sleigh, his joy knew no bounds. He positively howled with delight, and, what with the noise and the cheering, the visitors completely forgot their self-consciousness and the party went with a swing.

When it was over, when the toys had been distributed into small hands that had never handled a toy before ; when the songs had been sung and when heaps of small boys had climbed, shouting, over the entertainers and were at last ripe for bed, the party of business-men left—no longer shamefaced, but vowing that they had had the time of their lives, and that they would come again next year.

"Who are you people, anyway?" asked the gratified matron, who was facing the Christmas for the first time in her official experience with equanimity and satisfaction.

"Us?" said one of the now exuberant entertainers, startled out of himself for a moment. . . .

"Well, who are we, you fellows?" he asked, turning to the his friends. "What's our name?"

"Oh—er—Smith!" said another member.

"That's right!" said the first, with a nervous chuckle. "We're the Smith Family—that's who we are!"

They little knew, as they drove off into a night quiet after the cheerful babble of the hall, how bright a fire they had lighted that evening.

On the Art of Smithing.

Though the Smith Family grew rapidly and soon became quite out of proportion to the number of truly named Smiths in the world, its beginnings were not altogether easy.

The original Santa Claus party, soon after their first effort, started to visit hospitals and children's homes, and before very long a few of the friends to whom they reported their adventures began to come along and help them.

It was a principle with them from the first that their good work should be conducted in a more or less joyous atmosphere. Their outlook was: "We ourselves are all very human. Some of us have been unlucky in our time. Some of us, but for the better opportunities and the circumstances of our youth, might be in industrial or reformatory homes. Some of us, had our luck been bad instead of good, might have had tender constitutions or slightly light heads. Therefore, we don't feel that we can be superior—and we don't want to be, anyhow.

"We are just a party of the boys, so to speak, out to give somebody less lucky than ourselves a good time."

Their greatest cares, then, were to remain anonymous, to avoid adopting a "benevolent society" attitude or carrying out the ordinary functions of organized charity. Their particular job was to bring pleasure into

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the lives of people who ordinarily did not get much of it, especially at those seasons which are usually associated with celebrations and a good time.

It became necessary, half-way through 1923, to form an official organization.

On September 18, 1923, the Smith Family came into formal existence with sixty members, and a sub-title to its name to explain itself :—

"JOYSPREADERS UNLIMITED."

Its objects were set out clearly :

"To maintain throughout the whole year the spirit of true charity, letting not the right hand know what the left hand doeth.

"To maintain a continuous campaign of good cheer and goodwill, to brighten the lives of the afflicted, distressed, sick and needy, and to restore confidence in those whom misfortune hath dealt with.

"To develop a centre of service so that the spirit of the Family shall radiate throughout the length and breadth of the country.

"To develop a definite interest in the other fellow."

They found plenty of scope for their objectives, and plenty of helpers anxious to be Smiths. Before Christmas, 1923, hundreds of young and old people—patients in hospitals, inmates of homes for incurables, of sana-

toriums, industrial schools, and private dwellings into which want and trouble had penetrated—had come to honour the name of the Smiths. The deeds of the latter were marked by a quiet unobtrusiveness which was new to organized effort of the sort.

Half a dozen motor cars would drive up to the door of some institution on a Saturday afternoon, or in the middle of the week—

“We are the Smith Family. We’ve come to give you a concert.”

Usually somebody more sophisticated in current knowledge than the average waif or pain-racked permanent patient could have recognised among the unobtrusive Smiths an artist or two whom the whole town was talking about and paying many good shillings to hear; and it was always the endeavour of those early Smiths, when they entertained, to see that their concert was not merely a concert. The atmosphere was generally genial and “hail-fellow-well-met.”

And Christmas! The preparations for the 1924 Christmas were as different from the first tentative arrangements of 1922 as the Arabian Nights Entertainments from a copy of Hansard in the middle of a parliamentary session.

There was giving on every side, and the giving went a long way because there were virtually no organising expenses. Kindly-hearted people, who generally looked upon any charitable activity with suspicion, gave bravely to provide the mountain of Christmas hampers

which was made up. Self-styled selfish people—the kind who are usually the most unselfish in the end—rushed into the fun.

Wholesale-Grocery-Firm-Director Smiths vied with each other in providing provender. Toymaker Smiths put their heads together and made the Smith store-houses look like the original cave of Saint Nicholas. Shop-assistant Smiths, rubbing shoulders with their employers, wrapped till their fingers ached. And for weeks before the happy day, male Smiths and female Smiths travelled the suburbs seeking out cases of trouble, families in which illness or hardship had decreed a lean or a sad Christmas.

Inquiring Smiths, with tact and guile, made a census of every home and every institution which was to be served.

Grocer and Baker Smiths around the suburbs whispered secrets about people who could not buy bread. Policemen and Doctors and Chemist Smiths and kindly neighbours, matrons and nurses and wardsmen, combined in guile to find just what was needed for each individual case—for it was the policy of the Smiths to leave nothing to chance if they could help it. There was nothing standardised about their operations.

If they knew that Old Granny Jones at Lidcombe longed for a mob-cap or a copy of "The Pilgrim's Progress" to solace her last years, Granny got it if at all possible, and got it direct from the donor's hands so as to give the transaction a touch of personal warmth. If young Thomas Jones (all skin and bone and freckles, and minus a father) was casting longing eyes on that

cricket-ball in the window of the corner shop, there was an even chance that some snooping Smith would get to hear about it and report it down in the cellar where Santa Claus Smith and his wife were packing parcels in a hurricane of brown paper and flying straw.

And when the Smith party blew in on the Widow Robinson, they made certain not only that they had sufficient gifts to go round John Willie and Thomas James (twins), Isaiah, Millicent, Sadie, Annie, Sophia, Philomena, Doreen, Hector, Benaiah, and Jehosaphat Robinson, but that each member of the family had a gift suitable to his or her age, and that each gift was done up with mysterious wrappings, labelled with the actual name of its new owner, and delivered in an atmosphere of proper Yuletide hilarity.



Few who took part in the expedition of that memorable first organized Christmas will forget it.

About 1,200 children received a visit from old Santa Claus and his deputies. A thousand Christmas stockings, loaded with individual gifts, went out, along with mountains of balls, balloons, picture-books, hairy rabbits, dolls, squeakers, and other Christmas-tide paraphernalia. Whole grosses of ties, bottles of perfume, kerosene tins full of sweets, hundreds of pounds of cakes found their way into homes private and public. Concert parties were everywhere, so far as resources allowed. And when the cohorts re-assembled after it was all over, everybody agreed that it had been a wonderful Christmas Eve, replete with all kinds of adventure.

One delivery-car had encountered a poor woman with three children who needed an alibi from the neighbours before she would admit Santa Claus, because she feared that he was only the baliff arriving again. Another had aroused the suspicion of the police by reason of the opulence of its load. There was, all in all, material for a dozen short stories in the tales that came home with the workers, and it put heart into them for the New Year work, which, alas! was not accomplished without difficulty and effort, in spite of the steady access of workers to membership.



Every day there seemed to be some new need to be met. The concert parties were kept going week in and week out. Their programmes and itineraries were varied and extensive. One day they might be singing among the beds of incurables at Waterfall Sanatorium, or to ecstatic children in some industrial school. The next day they would be behind the bars of Parramatta Gaol. And every time they or the other workers of the Family went abroad, they heard of something more which needed doing.

Here, in an old Ladies' Home, was an inmate reading aloud an out-of-date paper to twenty others gathered round her.

Papers wanted!

Behold a procession of Smiths armed with every degree and brand of paper from "Ginger Meggs" to the "Sydney Morning Herald"!

The effort grows. Presently, apart from the annual gift of enough printed news-sheets to cover Hyde Park

an inch deep, £100 a year is spent in supplying popular fiction to the old and sick. This work continues for a long period until the more vital needs of the depression-time replace it.

Some Smith passes through the grounds of an institution.

Half a dozen old fellows are sitting along the fence with an air of dejection that needs explaining.

What's this? No funds to buy tobacco?

Well, within a week or two the haze of tobacco smoke over that suburb will half-blot out the sun, and the next Smith that passes by will need a gas-helmet.

The Crippled Boys' Home at Roylestone is a silent place.

"This is unnatural. Don't you little beggars like music?"

"Too right, we do, mister; but there isn't even a jew's harp or a musical gum-leaf on the premises."

Hands go into Smith pockets. There will be no complaint about the silence of Roylestone any more.

There is a large gramophone there now, equipped with Harry Lauder and "Tipperary"—the first of a long stream of fifty quietly donated talking machines.

The Old Men's Home at Lidcombe, with its 1,500 inmates, has a new set of bowls for its brand-new bowling green. It came from the Smiths.

Mrs. Jones, mother of the new twins in Blank Street, Surry Hills (whose husband has a broken leg),

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has received a sympathetic visit from Sydney's largest Family, who have presented her with a pink bed-jacket and four bottles of tonic which the doctor says she should have and which she undoubtedly cannot afford to buy.

A certain old lady in the back-blocks of Woolloomooloo has mysteriously acquired a pair of red slippers. She has been longing for red slippers for a long time, and of course it is very wasteful of sensible people to give her slippers because she has not long to live, and bread would be more to the point in any case.

Still, the Smith Family are not always sensible; primarily they are human. They have all the commonest foibles of mankind. They never forget that they are "joyspreaders," and that their mission is not charity. Their job is to give the other fellow some of the fun of life. They don't hand out a parcel of food merely on the principle that so-and-so needs a square feed, but with the idea in their heads: "My word, won't this be a delightful surprise to the old fellow when he gets it! Let's give it to him and make a bright spot in his year!"

Until you go about your work of giving in that spirit you are not a true Smith.

Short Stories of the Smiths.

There is a curious book in the office of the Smith Family. It might be called the "Golden Book," but it isn't. I believe the name on it is "Case Record."

But a short story writer would brand it with the more romantic name. Charles Dickens and O. Henry would have given anything to get hold of it. It would have been worth a fortune to either of them in plots. Kipling, even, with his cynical outlook, might have found material in it. That wonderful story of "The Case of Bedalia Herodsfoot" might have come out of it—though in that case it would have had a very different ending.

All sorts of things happen to Smiths.

They encounter devoted women slaving to keep their families together and out of the way of starvation.

They have glimpses of the continual and pathetic war with the bailiffs which goes on unnoticed by a happier world.

They encounter people who have not seen the outside of a sickroom for months.

They find stories even in their own office. What tales are in this morning's mail, for instance.

Mr. Secretary Smith opens his letters at Christmas-time.

Out of the first envelope falls a note which says: "I have very little ready money, but grow vegetables, also have some fowls, and at Christmas I am prepared

to supply vegetables, fowls and toys for a few poor children."

The next one has a postal note for five shillings in it, and a letter: "Our little mite, from a man and a woman nearly seventy who have to earn their own living; but there are some worse off than us."



The Pensioner's Party.

Lots of letters like this. Sometimes the story they tell is not apparent on the surface.

There was one which came in last year, and which asked simply whether the Smith Family could find a dozen children to attend a Christmas party. The children were found and sent to an address in a good suburb. Afterwards, in accordance with custom, an inquiry was made as to whether they had behaved themselves, and how the affair had gone off. The Secretary being told that it had gone with a swing and would be repeated next year added some thanks.

"Oh, don't thank me," said the apparent hostess. "I didn't pay for it."

Then came the story. There lived in an institution an old-age pensioner, a dear old lady, devoid of relatives; and out of her pension she put aside every week a small sum which accumulated until Christmas time. With the funds thus gathered she gave a party to as many children as could be managed. This was her annual treat, and her only condition was that each party should be photographed and that she should receive a copy of the picture. Her portrait gallery was her special pride.

The Last Present.

And the Smiths have stories of their own parties no less poignant. Once, at Waterfall, they found when they had handed round their presents that there was one over.

"What's this?" asked the Chief of the Smiths. People are usually on the spot bright and early when presents are about.

"This," it appeared, was young Bill, who was not fit to be present. He was to have his present taken to him by a nurse, as duly happened. Then it appeared that Bill was made of sterner stuff. He was not having any present from any nurse.

Santa Claus or nobody for Bill!

The nurse capitulated.

Santa, in all his finery, was taken behind a screen. There was poor little Bill, unable to move, unable to raise his hands. They gently gave him his present. He was never to have another in this world, because he barely lived through the night.

It was a very hushed lot of Smiths who drove back to town that evening after their concert to the children.



Tommy Tuckwell's Monument.

And take the case of Tommy Tuckwell of the Lazaret. Tommy is more worthy than a lot of public benefactors to have his name engraved on a slab of granite in fat gold letters, but it never will be; the records of the Smiths is all that will preserve his fame outside the Lazaret.

In plain fact he was not a real Tuckwell. He was a Javanese with one of those characteristic names like Ventacachellum which people are inclined to laugh at, but which very often cover personalities that we ourselves would be more than proud to own.

Tommy changed it to Tuckwell in honour of one of the oldest established families on the Hawkesbury, for whom he had worked for many years and who had been kind to him. This practice is another good old Oriental custom.

One day there was tragedy. Tommy developed leprosy. He spent many years in the Lazaret, where he was noted as a gentle, well-mannered and considerate patient, bearing his horrible affliction with fortitude. In course of time he came to die.

Two or three years afterwards, members of the Smith Family appeared at the Lazaret to instal wireless. They did it thoroughly.

The equipment which they put in made a set already there look rather like a toy.

"We'd better take that thing away," said the Smiths.

"Oh, no you don't," said the superintendent. "That's Tommy Tuckwell's monument. We never intend to part with that."

And here was another story. It had been discovered, when Tommy died, that he had left half of his savings to buy the set to amuse his fellow-inmates in the Lazaret.

Tommy, in a word, was a true Smith !

The Musical Roller.

Little stories crop up in the letters of thanks which arrive after Christmas. Chuckle, for instance, as you think of the picture conjured up by this extract from a long epistle of gratitude written by a mother with a large family :

“It’s a great pity you splendid people cannot see the youngsters’ little faces on Christmas morning. My youngest boy, aged eighteen months, received your lovely toy, the musical roller. He has played it ever since and has taken it to bed.”

It needs only a flash of intuition to realise the difference which the musical roller made to the atmosphere of that home on Christmas Day. Many a Smith, since the beginning of time, has lived at Christmas-time with a musical roller and will understand.



A Party with an Admiral.

The children and the people who are objects of the Smith Family efforts will have a few reminiscences themselves. What boy, for instance, will ever forget the party arranged on H.M.A.S. “Canberra,” when 500 kiddies were entertained by the captain, officers, and crew, and shook hands with that doughty adventurer and writer of adventurers’ books, Admiral E. R. G. R. Evans, then in command of the Fleet ?

What girl who was there will ever forget that damp, unpromising day when it seemed that the Harbour Picnic could not go on, and the sad occasion was turned

to a glad one through the determination of the Girl Smith organizers, who commandeered a whole café floor of a big store and turned it into a most attractive picnic ground replete with all the paraphernalia of childhood.



The Hardness of Life.

One might go on with stories endlessly, but one more will have to suffice. Here it is, told in a letter :—

Dear Sir,—On Tuesday I received your ever-welcome letter. I had hardly liked to write my troubles to you—the one and only friend I have met in this very Christian-like world. After your letter of inquiry as to my new home, I will try and let you see a mother's fight for existence.

On arrival here, my sons felled trees and cleared a place to build on ; then, after one month's hard work, succeeded in building a log hut 32ft. by 20ft. We had to collect old iron from tips near and far for the roof. They eventually had sufficient old iron to roof the structure—we were at least sheltered from the sun and wind. Then they cleared the remainder of the two and a half acres—and mind, only with hand-tools ; we were able to grow vegetables in plenty. Then you enabled me to purchase the tank.

We were very happy. But last August the Inspector of the Child Welfare came up and gave me one week to put on a new roof, move elsewhere, or lose my two children. What could I do, without a penny ? We found a little two-rooms and kitchen for 7/- a week, which we took, and are still there. The boys again started to build a four-roomed structure, each room 12ft. by 12ft., and when finished will mean doors, windows and roof—believing, hoping, praying to God in some way to find work so as to buy iron for the roof ; but no work has come—only two days at Christmas for relief.

Then a nearby farmer, having plenty of ground, offered my boys to go halves in all profits if they would work and sow five acres with melons, tomatoes, corn, peas, beans and

pumpkins. They worked the ground for five months—one with no boots; everything was growing lovely, and we would have had the first melons and peas and tomatoes in the market. Then God saw fit to send the hail three weeks before the crop was ready for market, and destroyed everything, leaving the ground like a table. The hail here was three feet deep.

On Saturday, 23rd January, I received a letter from Waterfall telling me that my husband could not die until he saw his children, and I buried my feelings and asked a neighbour to loan me £3 to take all the little ones (except one who had no boots) up to him, and I took them to their father on the 25th January, and my husband passed away on Wednesday, 27th January, at 5 a.m., and was buried on Thursday, 28th, at 1.30.

Oh, I'm not complaining, but I must tell you the whole truth, as I will never be able on earth to repay, even in a small degree, the only true Christian it has been my fortune to meet.

Hoping I am not boring you with all my troubles, and wishing you and yours every success, I will close with every good wish from,

A THANKFUL MOTHER.

It is a whole condensed novel in itself, and serves the combined purpose of bringing home to us how much worse off some other people are than ourselves; how much the Smith Family, with all its brightness, is needed; and how much room there is for lots more Smiths in the world.

All Sorts of Good Work.

Eight years after the first essay of the Family at joyspreading, there was only one thing which had not grown so very much. That was the cost of office organization.

It is true that a modestly-paid secretary and a couple of typists were employed, and there was a small permanent office rented in the basement of a building in Pitt Street. But administration expenses had not expanded as they usually do in such societies, and this for a very good reason.

It has been explained that the essence of the work of the Smith Family is its personal touch. It not only seeks to do good, but it seeks to do it in a specific way. Its theory is that no mere machine can do the sort of thing it wants to do.

Therefore it is an obligation of every Smith not only to give, but to give personally.

Money, of course, can always be used for special purposes. But contact is also necessary.

Therefore, when John Brown Smith walks into the office and says: "Here is £5 for Christmas presents," the secretary does not sign a receipt and go out and buy something with the money unless there is no other way out of it.

His usual mode of procedure is that he opens the side-door of his office and shouts at the two volunteer

cobblers who are mending boots which have been brought in to be reconditioned for those who need boots : "Hey, you fellows, stop hammering for a minute, will you ?"

Then he turns to the would-be donor and says : "Five pounds, eh ? As a Smith, you'd like to spend that yourself, wouldn't you ? Well, out in such-and-such-a-place there's so-and-so with so many youngsters who need such and such. What about hopping into the car and going out to have a look—see for yourself ?"

The result, generally, is that John Smith goes, is conquered by the needs of the situation, comes back and has another consultation with Secretary Smith, and departs feeling that the case which has fallen in his way has become his special care. He has the personal thrill of giving and sees real results for his money.

That is the secret of Smith economy and of the continuing nature of the Smith work. The original six workers scarcely know their casually named Family, so much has it extended, so wide has its ambit become. Its Christmas parties are the biggest known to the State. Five or six thousand adults take part in them. Fifteen hundred old men at Lidcombe are provided for ; some hundreds of old ladies at Newington. Apart from gifts in kind, which are enormous, and gifts brought by individual Smiths, and by the "Goodfellows of Sydney" (who always make a Christmas appeal to deal with Smith cases), it takes about £1,250 to cover the expenditure of the Smiths for Christmas Eve alone.

A thousand families get Christmas hampers ; and when the Smith Family says hamper it means hamper—not a pound or two of groceries done up in brown paper.

The Smith Family.

This is the kind of surprise package which arrives at the doors of the destitute during Christmas week when the Smiths are abroad :—

Meat.	Milk.	Vegetables.	Fruit.
6 lbs. sugar.		2 lbs. rice.	
2 lbs. tapioca.		$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. tea.	
2 pkts flour.		1 lb. jam.	
2 lbs. cake.		1 tin peaches.	
2 tins condensed milk.		1 tin meat paste.	
2 lbs. oats.		3 lbs. salt.	
1 tin golden syrup.		2 lbs. dates.	
1 lb. walnuts.		2 pkts. jellies.	
1 bar soap.		1 lb. cocoa.	
1 pkt. custard powder.		2 cakes bath-soap.	
1 lb. biscuits.		1 pudding.	
1 pkt. figs.		$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sweets.	

With a Christmas box for every child.

A car drives up. Out comes a weighty package. "Christmas box from the Smith Family, Mrs. Brown, and something for the kids. Happy Christmas and better luck next year!"

Furthermore, when a Smith says party he means party, just as vigorously as he means hamper when he says it.



The Smith Gatherings.

The whole life of a Smith is built on parties. Every quarter the Family has a party to itself just to talk things over, for instance. It is conducted on the bring-your-own-drinks-and-sandwich principle—or at least the money to buy them.

There are no bigger gatherings of men in Australia than these, and none more democratic. It is a pleasant sight to see about a quarter of an acre of Smiths of every size, weight and measure enjoying their community sing-song or listening to the distinguished Smith who is always there to give a talk on some topic of public interest.

Governor-Generals, Governors, Railway Commissioners, cobblers, politicians, journalists, musicians, broadcasting announcers . . . every walk of life has its Smiths, and they all turn up to the quarterly parties from time to time and rehearse unconsciously so that when the Smiths give a party to their clients at Christmas time the Smith spirit has been well established.

Their procedure is not just to nip out to an institution and say: "Come along. Hurry up. We're going to give you a party! Let's get it over!"

That isn't the Smith spirit at all. Smith Christmas parties begin in the afternoon. A competent and versatile gang of Smiths arrives and divides into two sections. One concentrates on meeting the inmates, yarning, swopping tobacco and the latest knitting stitch. The other rolls up its sleeves and decorates the dining-hall.

Then dinner proceeds with Smiths as waiters. Everybody has cake cut for them and sweets placed on their plates, and everybody has a Christmas present as he or she files into the room. The banter flows fast and free, and after everybody is full to repletion, the concert begins.

Of course, merely being a Smith soon makes friends for one in no time, and many a Smith to-day has acquaint-

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tances who command his interest and help in all sorts of places—interesting old men, needy women struggling with three or four children, boys without parents, or with parents who have not done justice to them, crippled soldiers, lonely men, boys and girls who have found their way into industrial homes.

Of late years these young people in particular have had special attention, and a lot of them are looked up at intervals by their Smith friends, and so long as they remain inmates of a home they receive birthday presents with a little note each year.



Wireless for the Sick.

Out of all this basic work, calling for the organization of dozens of concert parties, hundreds of visits, thousands of quietly written letters, the booking of hundreds of motor cars at special times of the year, and the building up of armies of voluntary helpers has grown other undertakings. Each year the tasks grow bigger and yet more intimate.

It was discovered three years ago that the big Coast Hospital, with its many sections, its turnover of 10,000 patients a year, and its thousand beds, had a very pressing need for radio entertainment.

For months afterwards it was impossible to turn to the left or the right in those circles in which Smiths move without falling over some member of the family busily engaged in acquiring funds. The work was undertaken in six sections, and eventually cost more than £1,500. It did not take the thousand Smiths who were

at work on the job very long to do it, though the installation is the third largest of the kind in the world. Radio balls, radio exhibitions, smoke concerts, newspaper and radio appeals, and personal donations by Smiths and people who were qualified to be Smiths, enabled Sir Dudley de Chair to declare the last section open on April 1, 1930, before he left for England.

The Lazaret, the Waterfall Sanatorium, the Girls' Industrial Home at Parramatta, the Girls' Home at Brush Farm, the Lidcombe Hospital, the Old Men's Home at Parramatta, and the Boys' Home at Carlingford, too, have wireless—thanks to the Smiths—costing £600 ; and now the work is being extended to picture shows for the sick and the bedridden, in addition to the regular concerts. The Lazaret has its own cinematograph, so have other institutions.

So thoroughly has the concert branch of the work come to be done that a distinguished artist of the lighter order of mirth rarely comes to Sydney without being escorted to some institution and allowed the privilege of giving a free entertainment. But for the time being he becomes Smith, and nobody hears of the good deed.



For Hungry Girls.

Take another activity. Early in 1930 an obviously tired and footsore girl came into the office and wearily burst into tears.

She had no work, no money, no friends, nowhere to go, since she had outstayed her welcome at various hostels.

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Some kindly Smith whom she had encountered had suggested that she might find shelter for the week-end through the Family. The Family, of course, had no hostel, no funds for such cases, but its principle is never to let the other fellow down if it can help it.

The incident brought home to them the fact that there must be hundreds of girls in like positions to that of their visitor, whose first consideration was to keep a roof over their heads during the time of trouble, and to secure meals while looking for work.

The job of providing these meals was tackled.

A number of first-class restaurants in town were approached and asked to provide a meal or two each day for girls sent by the Family. Within four months 1,200 meals had been provided in this way, one restaurant giving food to the value of between £20 and £30. The girls simply went and ordered their meals as if they were ordinary customers. Nobody but the cashier knew they were not paying guests. The restaurant received no advertisement for the good work they were doing.

It was done in the Smith spirit.

Some of the girls whose plight was desperate were housed as well as partially fed at the Smith Family's expense, and some of them to-day have been restored to wage-earning life as the result of the efforts of the Family.



Boots ! Boots ! Boots !

Then there is the matter of boots and clothing. Somebody suggested this winter that while everybody was ready to give warm clothing to the poor, nobody thought about sound boots which are equally valuable, especially to a man who is trudging the streets in search of work. Sound boots add to a man's appearance and self-respect and conserve his strength. Dozens of people now get boots through the Smith Family. They are made up from other people's cast-offs. These are sent to the Smith Family office, and there two unemployed cobblers give their time to the work of re-soleing and heeling them. Each pair of shoes cost the Family 2/- on an average to put into order, but the 2/- is always forthcoming.

The problem of clothing, too, has been re-tackled, but in a thoroughly organized way.



The Ladies—Bless Them !

Finally, it is, perhaps, necessary to say something about Mrs. Smith and Miss Smith. Do not imagine for one moment that the male Smiths went down on their knees and pleaded to these ladies to join them in their work. Rather, it was their policy to keep what they were doing to their self-conscious selves.

But—have you ever tried to keep a secret from your Mrs. Smith ?

“James, where are you going to-night ? . . . “Darling, I am going to the Stadium.” . . . “James, you

know quite well that this is Thursday, and there is no fight on Thursday . . . and last week you went to the Capitol and came home with an enthusiastic description of a picture called 'She Loves Me Not,' which was being shown EXCLUSIVELY at the Prince Edward. . . . Now, James, exactly—wh're—ARE—you going?"

The real difference between bad and good husbands is that no good husband ever risks having to face a conversation like this, even in a worthy cause, so the wise Smiths told their wives confidentially what they were doing ; and most wives, being good-hearted, decided to take a hand in the game.

You can bet it was not very long under those circumstances before the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Younger Smith Set were in existence.

The first of these organisations meets twice every week to pack parcels, sort gifts and "do over" presents of material. One lady in a single year recently re-made more than 600 garments for distribution. Five hundred yards of flannel were cut up in one week and given out to be made into garments.

Sometimes the Auxiliary is up to its waist in brown paper ; sometimes it is snowed under with remnants of tweed and flannel samples donated by city houses, which it makes into rugs. The members take part in the Christmas expeditions of the Family ; they have a special and very personal interest in various homes for unmarried mothers, whose only visitors they are ; and they, too, have their monthly gatherings, for their own enjoyment as do the larger (if not better) SEX.

The Younger Set takes special care of the Christmas cheer at various children's homes, devotes itself to all the services of the main body and the Ladies' Auxiliary, and generally serves a fruitful apprenticeship to Smithdom, out of which they get a lot of fun, and in the course of which they do as much good per head as their elders.

One might go on for ever telling of these sectional works the weekly expedition in which Diggers from Randwick and Graythwaite Hospitals are taken to the theatre; the 274 families in dire distress who are periodically fed by personal efforts; the special parties which allow hundreds of children, who in the ordinary way would never even see Sydney Harbour, or a first-class picture-show, to be entertained occasionally at festive seasons on battleships by real Admirals; and at resplendent city theatres; the drive which placed a cinema in the Lazaret, and has so far provided 2,000,000 feet of film to feed it; the work to get the second cinema into Gosford Boys' Home; Roylestone Crippled Children's Home has a Smith Family Pianola. More than fifty homes have Smith Family gramophones.

With all that has been done, not a single Smith has advertised himself or herself or even felt self-righteous because every Smith job has its own reward. No Smith ever feels that the other fellow is under any obligation to him for favours received. He soon learns that the giver gets more out of life than the receiver.

It is great fun to be anonymous. The other day the writer was discussing the Smith Family with the manager of one of the greatest newspapers in Australia.

"Queer lot," said the manager, who by reason of his position knows more than most about human frailty. "They do an immense amount of good apparently, but I have never before heard of any organization which did not publish the names of its committee. One of them came in to see me officially the other day."

"Who was it?" asked the writer.

"He said his name was Smith!" replied the manager.

What remains to be done—work for Malnourished Children.

"Well, here's another problem," said Mr. Secretary Smith, raising his voice slightly to overcome the din of his two cobblers next door—not to mention the explanations of one of the Smiths' many adopted nursing mothers who was acquiring free tonic on the other side of the open door, and the noise of the second typist packing donated jam on the shelf.

"Good!" said the doctor who gives his every Friday to the Smith Family service. "I suppose we've got to turn to and find a way of paying income taxes for ruined capitalists or something now."

"Better job than that," said the Secretary, and he proceeded to outline the problem which had just fallen on the Family out of the blue.

When the depression reached its height it suddenly occurred to somebody in the Family that many a small child in the industrial districts was probably losing its whole future through present malnutrition.

First inquiries suggested that there was little or nothing in it. But a deeper inquest showed a very urgent need.



The Christmas calls of 1930 provided that quite a number of children were already handicapped both

through underfeeding and through infections prolonged by malnutrition.

Probably it would not have deterred the Smiths from getting to work on the problem had they known what it would lead to. When they tackled it first it seemed just one of those many transitory auxiliary jobs which come to 81 Pitt Street—the Family home.

But in their carefree eagerness to take on any job which needed doing, they did not realise that they were embarking on a national work.

One look at their newly-accepted task showed them that it was not merely a matter of providing food for the hungry. Special cases of illness required special nourishment. It was a task in which there could be no thought of mere rule-of-thumb methods. Each child needed skilled personal attention, so as a preliminary each case is referred to a doctor who goes into its features and prescribes. Sixty-eight honorary doctors are now at work in the various suburbs, giving their time to the cause freely and without any charge.

Each case is reviewed regularly by the Smith Medical Board every few weeks.

Should progress not measure up to possibility the Family sets out to discover the reason why, and no stone is left unturned to give the child concerned a maximum chance.

Soon it became apparent, through experience, that one of the major reasons why patients did not mend, even with liberal tonic doses and abundant milk and nourishment, lay in bad teeth. With a glittering eye

Mr. Secretary Smith descended on a dentist to supplement his honorary medical staff of 68 in the suburbs. His glittering eye was not needed.

"Certainly we'll help!" said the dentists, when they heard the story. "Only too glad to help."

Now every malnourished child who comes within the ken of the Family undergoes dental inspection and, if necessary, treatment at the hands of the Smith Family dentist in his suburb. Here again the work is done without charge. One Macquarie Street dentist gives an hour every week to the Family, opening his room at 8 a.m. for the purpose.

The opticians have been "roped in," and the wonderful part of the organization is that not only work, but material, is provided free by these professional men, and they have had a good deal of providing to do.

The average age of the children which have been treated under the scheme has been five and a half years; the average period for which each has been treated has been eighty days—four days short of three months. The approximate cost to date has been £2,500; and this does not by any means represent the investment in the work if one takes into account the immense value of the professional working time which it has consumed. The honorary physicians of the family have reported on children 2,610 times. The Medical Board has made 2,445 case reviews, making a total of 5,055 consultations which have been entirely free of fees, apart from those given by dentists and oculists and material used.

Measured in terms of sectional effort, the results

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have been as great comparatively to the influences behind them, as to the whole. From one business house alone the Family has received £450 for the work, from another £130. Seven businesses and their employees have contributed each between £25 and £40, and fourteen between £15 and £25.

Frequently the amounts themselves do not tell of the full story of the enthusiasm and helpfulness behind them. At the one end of the scale was a dance which yielded £20 in the produce of eighteen-penny tickets ; at the other, Wednesday community concerts at the Savoy Theatre, from which £480 in reservation fees have been received.



Acting on their normal principle, the Family has sought to introduce the personal touch into the work, and so far most of it has been financed by 75 office staffs and individuals who have each undertaken the care of one child or more. A specific child is allotted. The office becomes its god-parent, so to speak, and has the satisfaction of knowing that its subscriptions are doing direct good.

One business house is looking after no less than 28 children, and around the operations of the branch a normal Smith Family atmosphere has grown up. The whole of one office staff visited its charge recently and gave him a birthday party, much to his proud astonishment, since it was the first birthday party he had ever known in his nine thin years of life. Another office discovered that the mother of their charges was in hospital, and its staff took to visiting her regularly.

But with all that is being done, with all the generosity of doctors, the selflessness of dentists and opticians, and all the pouring out of the milk of human kindness from financing offices and individuals, there is tenfold as much still to be done, and on this work the Smith Family is now concentrating.

It calls on all the Smiths of New South Wales to rally round and help. It calls on everybody with healthy children of their own, going to good schools and growing up to the heritage of a sound, robust, Smith-like constitution to remember the waifs who are losing their chance in the world through illness and the lack of right food and medical treatment.

The community at large will have to carry the responsibility of many of these children, in any case, forever, if it does not take them in hand at once. Left to their fate they are a human liability and a burden.

Properly treated and Smithified back to health, they become self-reliant citizens and an asset to the country.



Good health is the greatest cure for all the evils of the world. The best panacea for Bolshevism is content.

Most revolutions have been carried out by men who have known starvation or illness in their youth. Most of the murders, cruelties and crimes can be traced back to childhood influences.

No happy man ever murders ; a murderer kills to remove some unhappiness, to satisfy some craving.

Nobody steals who is content ; thieving is the outlet of an unsatisfied instinct.

Kindness is the mainspring of the world and the Smith Family to-day calls for a few thousand more kind people with pennies of sixpences or shillings in their pockets to help those children who need those coins in terms of milk and fruit and oranges.

It does not necessarily want that money to pass through the Family's hands. It wants you, quietly, to form a group among the girls in the office or the boys at the club, or among that regular poker-school which plays its tram-tickets on its way home of an evening, or among the fellows round the luncheon table.

Then let somebody come to the Smith Family office and say: "We will bring one youngster back to health and find the six shillings a week to do it."

It is not a very big job measured in personal effort; but if it were done generally, wherever it needs doing, the national effect of it would be tremendous, the amount of happiness it will make will be immeasurable.

There is no other work better worth doing, and somehow the Smiths are going to see to it that they fail nobody who is a child and in need of succour and happiness.

They have taken on the job with confidence because years of Smithing has given them an immense faith in the goodness of human nature.

It only remains for you good people of New South Wales to join with them in their efforts. Health-bringing is the best form of joyspreading you can do.

And now—your part!

So far, this story has been all words: the deeds on which it is based have been done and the future lies before us.

The Smith Family never has appealed to the public for members or for help, though kind people sometimes have made an appeal for it when the needs of Christmas have proved bigger than the Smiths' hearts.

Now, however, they are up against a problem such as they have never before been called on to face.

The problem of malnourished children seemed one of their usual jobs when they first tackled it, but instead of them being able to take a grip of it, it is beginning by its magnitude and importance to take a grip of them.

BADLY NEEDED—more help to pull a thousand or so ailing mites out of the mire of illness, and to turn them from a liability into a real asset to the community.

Remember the old axiom: "He who gives quickly gives twice." Do it right away, and feel the repercussion in your own happiness in having done so.

There is no limit to the amount of your investment in this work—its dividends are paid in happy and healthy children.

Because we know that every real human good-fellow will get as much fun out of pulling his weight as all the existing Smiths do, we hope that next time an instalment of Smith history is written, YOU—the reader—will be able to feel a personal pride in the record as a Smith.

It is easy to be a Smith; easier to stay one when you have joined.

THE SMITH FAMILY JOYSPREADERS UNLIMITED

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