

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

June 30, 1917

## BILLY SUNDAY'S NEW YORK CAMPAIGN

**C**LOSING WITH A RELIGIOUS demonstration, "the most remarkable ever seen in New York," according to a member and supporter of the campaign, Billy Sunday ended his ten weeks' work in New York. Twenty-five thousand persons were reported present at the final meeting in the Tabernacle, and a farewell was given by people who "jumped upon the benches, cheered, applauded, waved hats and handkerchiefs, and a mighty chorus of voices took up the shout: 'Good-by, Billy, God bless you!'" The number of trail-hitters registers 98,264, and this his supporters declare to be the most successful campaign in the evangelist's career, judged by the number of converts or by the public appreciation expressed in the free-will offering. This amount totaled \$110,000 and is said to be "more than twice as large as any previously reported in the evangelist's campaigns." Of this sum the percentage which is usually apportioned to Mr. Sunday as his personal compensation will be divided between the Red Cross and the Army Y. M. C. A. "Billy Sunday literally worked for nothing but glory in New York." These are the outstanding figures of the campaign about which there was much preliminary pessimism. Answering the question as to what he has done for New York, *The Tribune*, of this city, reports him as saying:

"I have delivered God's message to as many as I could reach. I have caused some of them to stop and think and pledge themselves to repent. I can't guarantee they'll repent; there's more hope for them, tho, than if they hadn't received the message. I've started things in New York; I've given hope to Churches that had none; I've done my bit as well as I can.

"It's up to the ministers now to save the souls that have indicated they want to be saved; I've turned over the names and addresses of thousands—I don't know how many thousands—of men and women who have given evidence of a desire to repent. These names have gone to the ministers in the districts where these people live; it's up to the ministers to keep them in the Church."

There is said to be no means of knowing how many sincere converts are included in the thousands of trail-hitters. We read in the *Tribune's* news columns:

"A great many undoubtedly have been deeply moved by the evangelist and have pledged themselves to obey his injunctions with the greatest sincerity and firmness of purpose. Hundreds of others have trod the sawdust trail 'as a joke,' 'because it's part of the show,' or merely because they found a certain amount of 'fun' derivable from the experience.

"Numbers carried the joke so far as to sign cards as converts, giving fictitious names and addresses and frivolous misstatements of their religious intentions. The percentage of genuine converts is estimated by the Sunday campaign committee to be at least 80; other estimates are from 60 per cent. to one-half, while less kindly critics of Sunday's evangelism express the belief that not more than 10 per cent. of his trail-hitters are 'good Church prospects.'"

Mr Sunday pays his compliments to New York and gratefully revises his first impressions. He declares that when he first saw the big building he believed "they were right when they called it the 'graveyard of evangelism.'" Further:

"No, sir, I didn't have any ambition to come here. But I did have an ambition to go where the Lord wanted me to go, and so I came and I knew the Lord would see me through.

"I was scared stiff until I got into the Tabernacle, where the folk were jammed in so hard you could hear the planks creak. They looked good to me, and, say, I found them easier to preach to than any I ever got up to talk to. They seemed to want to hear about God. I think New-Yorkers are keener than country folk; they are more used to seeing and hearing new things; they catch on quicker. They are so appreciative and responsive that it just drags the best out of you to preach to them. I couldn't give them any Class B stuff; not even when I was tired and wanted to.

"I shall never forget New York and the fine people I have met—people of prominence in business and society women. Say, the way some of these society women have worked in our

*BILLY SUNDAY*

women's meetings! I didn't think much of society women as a class, but I've got to revise that. They worked day in and day out, and no 'you pat me and I'll pat you' stuff, either.

"I found New York ready for the Word of God. The city has shown me that it is not the heartless metropolis it is so often pictured to be, but that its multitudes are not the proud, God-defying sinners they are supposed to be, but intensely human, lovable creatures of sin who don't glorify the devil and his works. New York has shown me that its Great White Way is not the pathway to hell that many believe. I know that many who walk the pavements of Broadway are as close to God as I am.

"And then New York has done for me what I shall never forget. It has opened up its homes to me and showered me with the noblest and kindest hospitality that I've ever met with. I've met some of the biggest men in America here and they've shaken my hand and said they were glad to see me. And I've been glad to find them Christians for the most part, and all of them eager to have the Word of God spread out over the city.

"New York has given me more faith in men, in God's word, and in myself. I am sorry to leave, even for the West, which I know so well."

Two opinions on the effect of Mr. Sunday's words on the liquor-traffic are worth quoting. One is from Mr. William M. Anderson, state superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League of New York:

"I would say that the one thing which he has done and which can never be undone is, first, to create sentiment against the liquor-traffic, helping many people to realize for the first time its real iniquity, and making the traffic more horrible to those who have long vaguely recognized that it is evil; and then, secondly, he has developed a conviction in the minds and hearts of his hearers and those who read after him that it is not merely enough to hate the liquor-traffic or to be against it, but that it is everlastingly up to them to do something against it—specifically, to vote against it when the opportunity arises.

"It is not true that every city where Mr. Sunday has held a meeting has voted dry, because frequently other issues have come in; but most of them have, and under anything like normal conditions the influence of a Sunday revival is sufficient to turn the tide and carry the election dry where the vote otherwise would have been very close. . . . Experience shows that whatever Mr. Sunday's contribution to the antiliquor fight, it 'stays put.'"

Mr. Hugh F. Fox, secretary of the United States Brewers' Association, declares that "the brewers, as brewers, have nothing to say." And—

"so far as I have heard, Billy Sunday had no opposition from the saloon-keepers. Probably a good many of their patrons have been to hear, and maybe hit the trail; but, as in other cities he has visited, it is not likely their habits have changed much. When he talks about 'booze' he really isn't hitting very many people. Probably 75 per cent of his hearers take a glass of beer or wine occasionally, or even many of them habitually, but very few take more than is good for them."

Mr. Sunday will take a holiday before his next evangelistic work, tho even this may be curtailed to admit of visits to the army training-camps. It is even reported that Washington authorities have asked him to make a trip to the fighting countries on the Western front. We read:

"The idea of carrying the Gospel to the American troops has been on Sunday's mind, he said yesterday, ever since war was declared by the United States. George Sunday, Billy's son and campaign manager, discust the idea with the Washington authorities during a recent visit to the capital, and Billy's project was warmly encouraged.

"When the British war-commission was in this city recently General G. M. T. Bridges and other members of the body discust with Sunday the possibility of his going to England to preach. Sunday then said he would like to undertake the work if it could be made to fit in with his engagements in America."