

March 15, 1913

BILLY SUNDAY'S GREATEST CAMPAIGN



BILLY SUNDAY,

"A bundle of nerves, with every fiber tense."

"**A**LL HEAVEN is shouting and the devil is glum!" So, we are told, Billy Sunday summed up the results of his recent seven weeks' revival in Columbus, Ohio. And the Columbus papers believe that this was not only Mr. Sunday's most successful campaign, but the greatest evangelistic demonstration of modern times. Columbus, says *The Ohio State Journal* of that city, now holds "every record in modern evangelism, including largest numbers of converts, largest sum raised for the evangelist, largest last day, and largest number of people interested." To come down to figures, we are informed that the conversions during the meetings which closed last month totaled 18,149, and that the sum of \$18,590.98 was raised for expenses, and over \$21,000 for the evangelist. As *The State Journal* described the campaign, the morning after it closed:

THE LEGALIZED SALOON



"For more than seven weeks hundreds of business men had neglected their private affairs, for an equal period social engagements were disregarded or side-tracked; for that length of time sixty churches had closed their doors, their pastors had devoted the bulk of their time to advancing the work of the campaign, and during all those days, Rev. Billy Sunday—the baseball evangelist—had talked and prayed, sweated and pranced about the platform, besought and entreated with sinners, flayed with scalding invective every sort of wickedness, and endeared himself personally to multitudes who either had been openly or covertly antagonistic.

"Under the spell of his oratory and the persuasive influences of his coworkers, all manner of men were made to take a new view of life. City and county officials, saloon-keepers and professors, society women and shop girls, school children and avowed agnostics, stood up and said, 'I publicly accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.'

"There were held 95 tabernacle meetings, at all but two of which Rev. Mr. Sunday spoke. At these meetings there were present between 750,000 and 1,000,000 persons. The total number of cards signed was 18,149, greater than any number ever secured anywhere in this country in a like period of time by Mr. Sunday, or, it is said, by any other evangelist."



HAS SHE A FAIR CHANCE?

In an editorial this local paper says:

"As a result of his mission here, we should say there is a stronger moral sense in this community than there ever was before; and now the pressing question is, how to preserve it, how to make it vital in civic, religious, and business life. He has made of religion a thoroughly practical matter, and has made the people feel it to be that way; and now it becomes the duty of every one who loves his neighbor and his city to put into practise in his own life the high lessons of duty, and honor, and faith, which Rev. Mr. Sunday has been preaching to us for the past seven weeks."

A Columbus minister, writing in *Zion's Herald* (Boston), explains the marvel by saying that "the masses believe in Mr. Sunday and turn to God." And a layman, a prominent lawyer in the Ohio capital, describes Mr. Sunday as follows in the daily paper already quoted:

"He is a bundle of nerves, with every fiber tense. He is earnest, sincere, and bears a message. These are the real secrets of his power. Whether studied or natural, he is a skilful rhetorician. He plays upon every rhetorical key. His language is rich in imagery and figures of speech. In fact, he speaks in similes and metaphors. His wit cuts like a knife, and his humor heals the wound. His short epigrammatic sentences are word-pictures, seared on the memory. His illustrations, usually homely, carry conviction.

"What he doesn't speak, he acts; thus the eye aids the ear. He is every inch an actor, and his vivid personifications, in speech and prayer, drive truths as straight to the mark as a thought of God. His directness, almost brutal at times, in exposing shams and baubles, attracts and rivets attention, because the audience knows his words to be true. He boldly speaks the truth. He thunders from the pulpit what other ministers dare only to think.

"Carping critics may denounce him, and continue to preach to empty benches, but Billy Sunday has a grip on the average human heart, and his influence will be long felt. He will preach more morals in seven weeks than our schools will teach in seven years, and the lessons will be better remembered. In my opinion, following him, there will be in this community higher purposes in life, more reverence, more devotion, more obedience to law, more tolerance, more food and clothing, and less of cigarettes, vice, intoxication, graft, and crime. If so, long live Mr. Sunday!"

A feature of the Sunday meetings that appealed to *The New Republic*, an anti-saloon league paper published at Westerville, Ohio, was, to quote one of its Columbus dispatches, the fact that "Old King Booze received a solar-plexus punch." "At least one saloonist hit the trail," we are told, and "several bartenders gave up their occupation." Further:

"The most patent injury done the liquor business, outside of the conversion of hundreds of its patrons, was the diminution of the saloon business in this city. Saloons were sadly neglected. Every afternoon and evening during the meeting the places down-town most frequented, usually, were all but deserted. One day, in one of the most popular cafés of this city, a place usually filled up at the noon hour, a man counted just five men there—two of them being in charge of the place. One man was drinking at the bar. Two others were standing away from the bar and were discussing Billy Sunday!"

Of course, there were those who objected to the evangelist's manners, methods, and theology. But this anti-liquor paper pays its respects to them in these words:

"The knockers are knocking. He didn't do it in the right way; he used violent language; he got too much money; some of the 18,000 will backslide anyhow, and so on, *ad nauseam*....."

"Billy says that these 'knockers' are so low down that they will need a flying-machine to get up to hell.

"At any rate, the 'knocker' who knocks because some good work is not conducted exactly according to his ideas is of not much account on earth or anywhere else."

Even those who have not heard Sunday know his manner and the characteristic combination of vivid slang and hard-hitting Scriptural expressions which he uses in his discourses. The *Ohio State Journal's* reporter tells how the evangelist described the fight between David and Goliath, mimicking both actors in the encounter:

"He called Goliath an 'old stiff,' who went 'strutting up and down,' 'blowing about his height and his bravery.' David 'called his bluff' and 'soaked the giant in the coco between the lamps.' He then 'took his sword, chopped off his block, and the gang skiddooed.'"

Yet it must be admitted that the greater part of Mr. Sunday's most effective sermons consist of sober, earnest, old-fashioned, direct, personal appeal to sinners. On his last day in Columbus, he defended his methods in these words:

Billy Sunday

"You must be willing to do things in a different way to move the unconverted toward salvation, to sacrifice your own personal prejudices for the sake of the folks on the outside. . . . If I were a pastor of a church I'd have a brass band in front of the church every Sunday night to let the devil know there's something doing down there.

"There's a verse in Scriptures on 'Feed my lambs;' but in some instances it ought to read, 'Feed my giraffes,' because some folks put the fodder so high that nobody can reach it.

"I never aspired to be a heady, throaty, intellectual preacher. I am satisfied to put the Gospel in such a way that the foundryman at the fires and the toiler in the ditch will understand it and be led to repentance. I don't care three whoops this side of perdition whether any gang in this town likes it or not. . . . I know what some dirty whelps will say if some of these converts slip and fall. They're just as good as the old converts, depending on the environment you make for them. When I leave Columbus I refuse to be held responsible for what happens. I've done my duty. Now it's up to you preachers."

THE LITERARY DIGEST

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