

Mr. Bryan at Philadelphia

On Monday night, April 15, Mr. Bryan delivered an address in the interests of total abstinence at a meeting held in the Sunday tabernacle at Philadelphia. The address will be found in another part of The Commoner. The following description of the meeting is given in the Philadelphia Inquirer, of March 16, 1915:

"Before what was probably the largest gathering of men ever brought together at one time in this country to listen to a purely total abstinence speech, William Jennings Bryan, secretary of state, chautauqua lecturer and advocate of world peace and national temperance, launched his attack on liquor at the Sunday tabernacle, Nineteenth and Vine streets, last night.

"Not even in the early days of the Billy Sunday revival did greater throngs foregather in and about the great wooden structure, and, vast as its interior, it was not large enough to accommodate the crowd that clamored for admittance.

"Long before 7 o'clock every seat in the tabernacle had been taken and the great encircling vestibule had been packed to the limit of its capacity. Not an inch of space was wasted, but hundreds had to be turned away.

"Secretary Bryan's speech was a bitter arraignment of liquor, the money that is spent on it and the effects of it, and the results at the conclusion showed that the candidate who three times essayed to carry his party's banner to victory, and failed, has lost none of his old power of gripping and swaying an audience.

Thousands Sign the Pledge

"Fully 12,000 men, according to popular estimate, responded to his pleas for volunteers to try and dissuade other men from drinking, and between 3,000 and 4,000 surged down the aisle, with signed pledges in their hands, when he called for those who would renounce drinking.

"As a trail-hitting proposition, if such it might be regarded, it eclipsed anything even approached throughout the whole of Billy Sunday's campaign; and, in the words of Bryan and the speakers who preceded him, it was a marshaling of the forces which eventually are counted upon to unfurl the flag of prohibition over Pennsylvania.

"Bryan's speech was largely a review of statistics, and his audience was made up in great part of members of men's Bible classes. Nevertheless, it was a temperance meeting such as surely never was held in this city and state before and the advocates of local option believe it will be in effect a call to arms whose appeal will be heard and responded to by the anti-liquor forces throughout the length and breadth of Pennsylvania.

"In strong contrast with Sunday, who races, jumps and throws himself about the platform, Bryan stood solid, almost immovable, upon a single spot upon the platform, his right arm behind him, hand half hidden in the folds of his coat tails.

"Only at intervals did he cut the atmosphere with tightly clenched fist, or shaking the fore finger of his right hand at the heads of his auditors, suddenly essay a verbal assent, and, with both arms outstretched and slowly rising, carry his hearers with him to the very pinnacle of his oratorical heights.

Ovation to Bryan

"Even before the tabernacle was wholly filled, the hymn that has become inseparable from a tabernacle meeting—'Brighten the Corner Where You Are'—rang to the rafters of the building. They sang it, they whistled it, they hummed it—and all this was but an overture to

the tumult that broke forth when Secretary Bryan, accompanied by Mrs. Bryan, Congressman J. Washington Logue, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Disbrow and Dr. and Mrs. John R. Sutherland, whose guests the Bryans were, appeared in sight.

"Whistles, shouts, songs, the honk-honk of automobile horns, the shrill strains of cornets and the beating of drums, made the tabernacle a din of noise, a veritable Bedlam for fully five minutes. It was like the screech of the crowds on an election night.

"The meeting was presided over by Dr. Isaac Sharpless, president of Haverford college. Before Secretary Bryan was introduced, Rev. Dr. George B. Adams, pastor of the Chestnut street Baptist church, offered prayer.

Rev. Dr. Rufus W. Miller of the National Abstinents' union, described the meeting and the purpose of the union as an effort to establish the 'total abstinence highway to human progress.'

Letter from Archbishop

"He then read a letter from Archbishop Prendergast, in which the latter said:

"I am strongly in favor of total abstinence, and, in my official relations, as head of this diocese, I do everything in my power to promote the cause. We have many Catholic total abstinence societies—one hundred and seventy—and I endeavor, at all times, to show my appreciation of their work in the different parishes of the city and country. These societies are not only thoroughly organized and flourishing in the Philadelphia diocese, but elsewhere, and have merited the commendation of His Holiness, the Sovereign Pontiff, and the members of the Hierarchy.

"I beg you to believe that I do not mention these facts in any spirit of self-glorification, but to show that while I must ask you to hold me excused from taking part in next Monday's meeting, I hope that you may have great success in your efforts to abolish the curse of drunkenness.'

Sunday Sends Letter

"Professor Charles Scanlon and others then analyzed the prohibition or total abstinence movement, and then 'Ma' Sunday arrived with a letter from Billy to Bryan, which later was read. In it the evangelist said he was so worn by his exertions of the last ten weeks, and facing the prospect of another vigorous week, he felt he was obliged to stay home and rest.

"The high school boys sang their song, which ended, 'William, William Jennings Bryan, we'll all drink grape juice yet,' and the secretary smiled a smile that would rival the Roosevelt effusion.

"It would be impossible,' said Bryan, 'for any one to surpass Billy Sunday's denunciation of the evils of intemperance,' and he did not attempt it.

"Instead, he confined himself to statistics and a comparison of what the money now spent in this country for liquor would accomplish if spent for other purposes.

Bryan Receives Pledges

"As Secretary Bryan, at the conclusion of his address asked those who were willing to take the pledge to rise, seats everywhere vacated, and more than 12,000 of those who filled the great tabernacle signified their intention of abstaining.

"Then, as the signing of pledges began, a surging crowd of more than 4,000 came down the aisles, front, side, and platform. In front of the platform, upon which Secretary Bryan, kneeling, was taking in the cards; a throng of several hundred men and

boys blocked the way. Unable to gain a place in front of the pulpit, the crowd turned to the side, and climbing over the choir benches, over the press stand, and up on the platform. It was necessary to call a detail of police to clear the pulpit sufficient to allow Mr. Bryan to continue his work of accepting the pledges.

"For more than an hour the secretary stuck to his task, while a never diminishing crowd waited in front, toward the pulpit, pledge cards waving. Policemen, ushers, and leaders in the movement gathered in the cards, presented them to Mr. Bryan, and returned them as fast as signed. At the conclusion of that period, while hundreds still waited, Mr. Bryan arose to his feet, and announced:

"I would like to continue signing these cards, but I fear that such a task is impossible to accomplish at one sitting. If you want me to witness your pledge, take the cards to any newspaper office and I am sure they will forward them to me at Washington. There I will sign them, and return them to the office. Then you can call and receive your cards."

"Long after Secretary Bryan and his party had left the tabernacle scores of men and boys remained, giving their pledges to the ushers, who stacked the cards on the pulpit."

CRYSTALLIZES SENTIMENT AGAINST BOOZE

Describing the Tabernacle meeting, W. Carl Sprout, in the Philadelphia North American, writes:

"William Jennings Bryan, in the Billy Sunday tabernacle last night, crystallized the city's sentiment against booze, which Billy Sunday began to stir up ten weeks ago.

"The secretary of state won, as they say in the tabernacle, 12,000 trail hitters for temperance.

"Witnesses to this remarkable gathering included some 15,000 men who jammed the building as it has seldom been jammed before. It was one of the greatest anti-rum demonstrations ever staged in this or any other city.

"The greatest body of men ever gathered together for a total abstinence meeting,' said Secretary Bryan, and national temperance crusaders in the audience, veterans in the war on John Barleycorn, agreed with him.

"Ovations for Mr. Bryan throughout the meeting were matched by ovations for another leader who wasn't there—Billy Sunday. The little evangelist sent a letter that was cheered so loud and so long that the tabernacle roof shook with the echo.

"After that, every time Billy Sunday's name was mentioned the 15,000 men loosed their voices, waved their hats and pounded their palms, one against the other, in a veritable bedlam of noise.

"This little evangelist was as much a part of last night's demonstration as the 15,000 men who attended it. Then anti-booze enthusiasm which Billy Sunday has been stirring up in old Philadelphia only needed a great leader like Bryan to set it in motion.

To Sweep the Nation

"And when it was set in motion, it started to sweep the nation. For out of the meeting last night, out of 12,000 men who rose to their feet like soldiers on review and took the pledge of total abstinence, began a national movement.

"Cards had been distributed throughout the audience for the men to sign, following Mr. Bryan's address.

"Mr. Bryan affixed his name to a card, writing across the top of the Billy Sunday pulpit. Twelve thousand men watched him, followed his example and filled up the tabernacle offering pans with the signed pledges. The Billy Sunday male chorus, seated back of the pulpit platform, sang the

Billy Sunday campaign song, 'If Your Heart Keeps Right,' as an accompaniment to the scratching of pens and pencils which were spelling freedom from habit, and a loosening of the shackles of despair.

"Every cloud will wear a rainbow, 'If your heart keeps aright!'

"That's what the pledge-signing meant to many families represented at that meeting last night—more rainbows and fewer clouds.

"The 12,000 total abstainers at that meeting last night will form the nucleus of one of the greatest anti-booze movements in America. The signers enrolled themselves as members of the National Total Abstainers union, an organization which aims to have 20,000,000 names by January 1, 1917.

"Their pledge was written by Secretary Bryan—he told last night how he wrote it on a train last November and signed with a chance companion in his travel. It is as follows:

"The undersigned promises, God helping, never to use intoxicating liquor as a beverage."

Greatest of Meetings

"Thus Philadelphia, sometimes called corrupt and rum-bossed and stronghold of the booze ring, became last night the cradle of an organization formed for the purpose of hitting John Barleycorn in one of his vulnerable spots.

"For,' as Secretary Bryan put it last night, 'if we can lessen the demand for liquor we can lessen the sale.'

"There were enough separate demonstrations and ovations at that single meeting last night to stock a nation-wide temperance crusade. Prof. Charles Scanlon, of Pittsburgh, a leader in the new abstainers' organization, referred to the meeting as 'the greatest single temperance meeting ever gathered at one time.'

"Secretary Bryan himself called it 'the largest body of men ever assembled on one occasion to hear a total abstinence speech.'

"With such opinions as these there is little need to say anything about the crowd and the enthusiasm. Men packed the big tabernacle, the rostrum, the vestibule to the outer doors."

FIFTEEN THOUSAND SIGN THE PLEDGE

The following description of the meeting was given in a Philadelphia daily paper of March 16:

"Twenty thousand persons saw Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan on his knees last night at the conclusion of his plea for total abstinence at the great temperance rally in the Billy Sunday Tabernacle. He had just asked how many persons would agree to sign the pledge with him and fully 15,000 arose, many of them surging down the aisle toward the platform. Several thousand signed the cards as they ran toward him. There was a crush around the platform and a thousand hands, each bearing a card, were extended up to him, begging him to affix his signature and witness their pledge.

"Down on his knees went the secretary and out went his hands. A score of cards were pressed upon him. Still on his knees, he took out his fountain pen and began to sign, using Billy Sunday's much-battered pulpit as a writing table. At first he signed his full name, but soon the crowd became so dense and the cries so insistent that he just affixed his initials.

Almost a Stampede

"The mob surged and crushed against the platform, hundreds climbing upon it until it sagged and cracked. A detail of police was called to push back the crowd, but still the secretary kept on signing, pushed this way and that way by the throng.