

Impressions of Billy Sunday

Charles L. Goodell, D.D., New York City, in Homiletic Review.

What do you think of Billy Sunday? is the question that is asked me by ministers and laymen and editors. I answer in a sentence: I think he is a man sent of God. To be specific, he is the greatest influence in America today in stopping the liquor business. His efforts are put forth at the point which all must agree is the most vital in all this work. Do all we can by legal enactment, if men really wish to drink they will find a way. Sunday assails the drinker himself and makes him give up his booze. After that the saloon-keeper and the brewer must go out of business. That is the effect which attends Billy Sunday everywhere. In the year after he was in Wilkes-Barre the breweries of that place sold 23,000 less barrels of beer than the year before.

No man is so fearless and outspoken against the social evil and all uncleanness as he. Preaching on the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," he said, "There are thousands of mothers whose hands are red with the blood of unborn children." One of the greatest preachers in America said to me: "I can not say that in my pulpit, but I am glad he has said it, for it is terribly true." You can track Billy Sunday across the country by the homes he has made happy, the hearts he has healed, the families that he has united. He is the uncompromising foe of every unholy passion.

We are talking about the need of an ethical revival. Here we have it. The grocers and merchants in the towns where he has labored will tell you that his converts pay bills that had been forgotten and outlawed, that a reign of common honesty is ushered in. Ought there to be any question about the value of such a man to society, especially as he brings his message to more people than any other evangelist?

Is his work permanent? In answering that question it is necessary to know what are the influences which surround his converts after he has gone. When the church has done its part to nourish them, it is wonderful how steadfast they have been. Dr. Guthrie, speaking of Sunday's work at Wilkes-Barre, says that a canvass of the Methodist churches in that district showed that 83½ per cent remained faithful to their work in the church at the close of the first year, and there had been more than enough converted during that year to make up for all defections.

As against all this, two objections are urged. First, that he preaches an antiquated theology. He is not a theologian at all; he is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." He knows only two things — man a sinner, Jesus Christ a Savior. He speculates on heaven and hell as we know as much and as little as we do about them. He is not always sound on higher criticism; but his appeal is to the highest criticism, namely, to the vindication which the old Book makes for itself as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

The chief point of his offending is that he uses words which are "coarse, irreverent, and highly offensive to good taste." The charge is possibly true in part. When you reel his blazing passion against evil you do not wonder at the words he uses. They are the words of the man in the street, the man whom he is trying to reach. That man will never go away and say he did not know what the preacher meant.

Strange to say, while the man in

the street appreciates the message, the men most moved by it are men of culture and social position. The University of Pennsylvania was never so moved as by Billy Sunday. The general conference of the Methodist church went wild with rapture over him. The representatives, senators, and judges of the United States thronged the greatest auditorium of Washington to hear him at a meeting where the speaker of the house presided. Presidents of colleges and theological schools and thousands upon thousands of the most cultured and spiritual men of the country indorse him. He is the most human of preachers. Let him get at the Philistine using his own sling, while we judge him by the results of his work.

BOUQUET FROM THE ENEMY

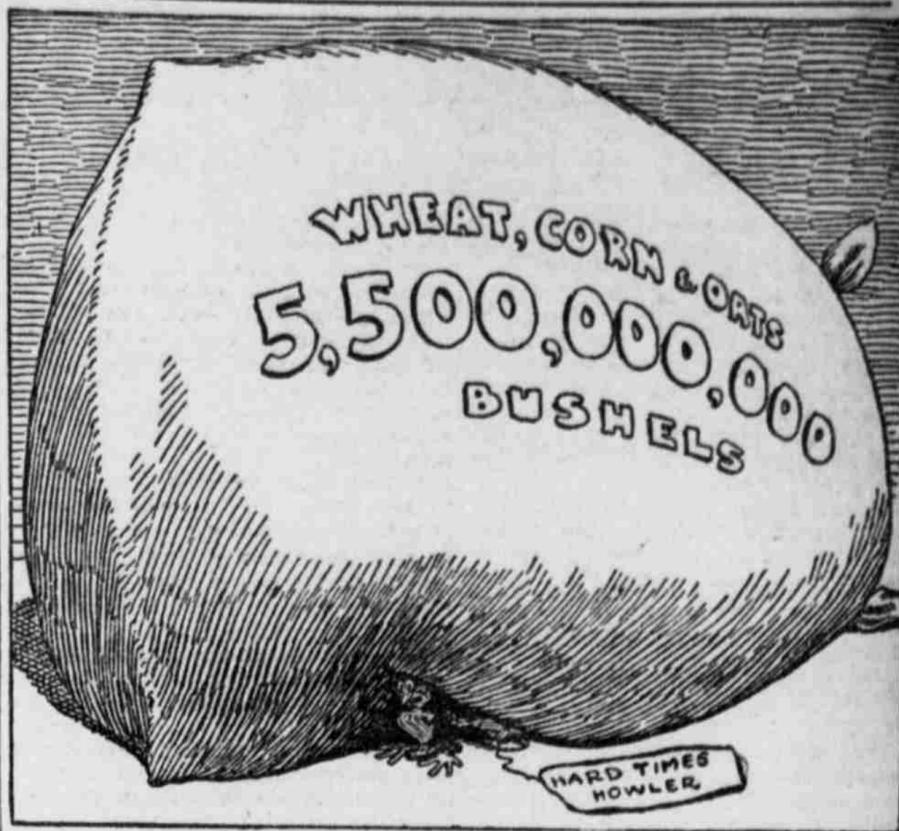
There is no escaping the fact that Mr. Bryan is the idol of the Chautauqua circuit, and it is equally true that every bit of the success he has achieved therein he has earned many times over. I am not, never have been, and see no possibility of my ever becoming, a devotee of Mr. Bryan's political fortunes; but as a platform speaker he is far and away the most brilliant and likable personality in the public eye today. He is an expert in playing upon the emotions of an audience large or small—preferably large—as ever was Dudley Buck in the manipulation of the keys and stops of an organ, and he can at will strike chords in the human heart as searchingly appealingly as any produced by an Eiman or a Kreisler on the violin, or a Paderewski at the piano.

The keynotes of his platform work are absolute sincerity and a magnetic humanness that are irresistible, and no individual who has ever listened to him in matters outside of political controversy, however reluctant to admit his greatness, has failed to fall beneath the winning spell of man, matter, and method. He is a good man, and has a greater number of points of contact with the general run of humanity than any other public speaker of today. It is a stimulating thing to know that in this line of human endeavor he has got his reward in the assured position he holds in a movement at which it is the fashion in some uninformed and cynical quarters to sneer, but which in point of fact has had a supremely awakening effect upon the American people, and for which we are all of us better off.

"All of which," as a friend of mine once put it after I had expressed myself in similar terms concerning Mr. Bryan, "is some tribute for a narrow-minded, hide-bound, bigoted, old standpat, reactionary, antediluvian republican to pay to a hated rival!"—John Kendrick Bangs.

A GOOD WILL TRAIN

The economic values that inhere in good will between men are driving corporations, business firms and individual employers into many sorts of welfare work that two decades ago, if urged upon them, would have been scoffed at as being as improvident as they were sentimentally silly. For instance, consider the good will or "harmony train" which one of the leading railways of the middle west and southwest now keeps moving over its main line and its branch lines. The staff aboard have for their task investigation of all complaints and prompt settlement of the same when justified; and the point is usually stretched in the patron's favor. The humblest resident of any town along the line may draw near, tell of his needs and difficulties as an act-



NO ROOM FOR PESSIMISM

—Denver Field and Farm.

ual or potential passenger or shipper. Scarcely anything is spared in the way of persuasion and pledge if thereby the good will of the community that has become critical can be won, and justice to the road and its owners also be conserved.

Representatives selected for the work are not of the Cassius type but are persons who can mix well with all sorts and conditions of men, and who, before they have said a word, nevertheless have helped their case by their air of radiant good will and fair play. It is a "please-the-public" atmosphere that they carry with them as they tour the states and follow the schedule that emanates from the central office. They want friends for their road among the farmers, storekeepers and manufacturers of the region, and they intend to win them by friendliness based on justice. So before grievances can become lawsuits and before untoward incidents can become magnified into iniquities they run their train on to a siding in the home town of a potential enemy and talk the affair out.

Of course the road profits by such an attitude officially declared and handsomely supported. Its legal department's expenses are lower, its

station agents can serve patrons better because of fewer wordy feuds, its shippers forward goods with more alacrity and in greater volume because confident that justice will be done, and the number of passengers carried rises somewhat because residents along the line feel more friendly toward railroad corporations.

To be fair to the officials of this and other roads pursuing this policy, let it be said that their motives are not wholly prudential and self-regarding. Like a great many other business men in the United States they see that justice and good will are good in themselves, and admirable entirely apart from any close relation they may have to ultimate business stability.—Kansas City Star.

CONSOLED

A rector in South London was visiting one of his poorer parishioners, an old woman, afflicted with deafness. She expressed her great regret at not being able to hear his sermons. Desiring to be sympathetic and to say something consoling, he replied, with unnecessary self-deprecation, "You don't miss much." "So they tell me," was the disconcerting reply.—Kansas City Star.

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