

"Billy" Sunday Now He Strikes 'Em Bouquet of Comment by Folks Whom You All Know

"Pa" Rourke, Our Base Ball Magnate:

I HAVE known 'Billy' Sunday for over thirty years, probably about as long as anybody in Omaha, and I am firmly convinced that his sincerity is real, and not a sham, as his opponents so often assert. I have never seen him conduct a revival or heard him preach a sermon, although I intend to do so during his Omaha engagement; but my personal acquaintance with him has led me to believe that 'Billy' Sunday is one of the really sincere religious workers in the country today.

"In 1884 I met Sunday first. I was playing on the Columbus team of the American association and he was playing with the Chicago Nationals. We played several exhibition games then. Sunday was always a willing and conscientious worker on the ball field, and it only stands to reason that he should be so in his present endeavor. He was a pretty good ball player, too, although not quite what he has been cracked up to have been. He was a good fielder and a good base runner, but only an ordinary hitter.

"There may be some of us who do not regard religion in the same light Sunday does and we may not approve of his methods, but I wish to emphasize again that I unhesitatingly believe that lack of sincerity, an accusation so often hurled against him by his enemies, is not one of his shortcomings."

Miss Nellie Magee, City Mission:

"Sunday is preaching to the masses of people, and bringing them to Christ, something which the churches are failing to do. When he is doing good and is accomplishing what others are unable to do, should his methods be criticised? I think not.

"Some things which he says are shocking to many persons and many persons cannot be reached by him, but he talks in the only language which thousands understand. He goes down to them and reaches them.

"Sunday differs from other preachers of today in that he is completely his own master and has his own tabernacle in which to speak. He is at liberty to call a spade a spade, black black and white white and no one can put him out. But other ministers have to be cautious."

Rev. T. J. Mackay, Rector All Saints:

"It is hard to say just what I think of 'Billy' Sunday, but I do think he is a religious mountebank. It is wonder to me how men of intelligence, such as the ministers who are behind 'Billy' Sunday, can descend so low as to be under the control of such a man.

"I was with Mr. Moody in Boston in 1875, and it was there that I got my first insight into religious revival work. Mr. Moody was entirely different from 'Billy' Sunday, but from him, in some way that is hard to explain, came the present system of revival work, which is a curious mixture of religion and business. Everything is run under a very careful business system, like a huge circus. Everything is arranged for beforehand, and all is based on sharp business and religious emotion. Mr. Sunday will probably do some good, but it is all more of a psychological exhibition than a religious movement. A herd of cattle is on the plains—they are startled by a shock, and they stampede. Nothing can stop them. The spirit of the herd is prevalent, but they finally become worn out, and stop of their own accord. It is the same with the people, but at the end of the eight weeks they will quiet down.

"Advance agents come and prepare the way for 'Billy' Sunday. The public mind is prepared for a great religious movement. Everybody is looking forward to his coming. At the psychological moment he arrives and is met at the station by a large group of ministers. Of their own free will? No. They have been told to meet him. Remember, this is all wonderfully managed. It is a great big religious circus. He appears on his stage, backed by a magnificent choir. He addresses a tabernacle overflowing with people. The papers devote whole columns to him, and newspaper men follow his every move, and there is so much clap-trap about it. So much clap-trap and sensationalism. Without his slang and his athletics the effect would not be the same.

"A Quaker meeting house is as full of the spirit of God as is Mr. Sunday's crowded tabernacle. There is just as much air in a forest when there is not a leaf moving as there is when a tornado is tearing it to pieces. The Holy Spirit moves quietly, not spasmodically.

"I wouldn't oppose, and didn't oppose, Mr. Sunday's coming to Omaha. I hope that his work will do some good, but my experience with conversion and converted people leads me to believe that no conversion will amount to anything unless the man is raised to a higher plane, renounces all of his old associations and environments and is sustained continually by the most helpful influences."

Rev. Titus Lowe, First M. E. Church:

"It is hard to think how the great religious campaign which we have inaugurated here in Omaha could have had a more auspicious beginning. The first day's attendance was simply a sign of the mighty days ahead. Indifference to Mr. Sunday is fast turning to positive interest, and criticism of him is dying a quick death. The outstanding thing in Mr. Sunday's ministry is his blood-earnest sincerity. No man who listens to him doubts this for a minute. All indications point to a tremendously successful campaign. We look for the greatest religious movement ever known on the American continent. The city of Omaha, already powerful in its business life, is to become equally strong on its religious side."



Rev. "Billy" Sunday as He Appears Right Now in the Midst of His Omaha Revival Engagement

Photo by The Bee's Own Artist

Rev. G. W. Savidge, People's Church:

"I am not a worshipper of 'Billy' Sunday or any other man. I do not heartily endorse all he says or does, but I believe him sincere in his work. He is a man of uncommon make-up, very eccentric and highly nervous. He must either work the way he does or he cannot work at all. He has had a very terrible experience with sin. He sees very clearly the awful results of an evil life and he warns men of the consequences of sin. He has a simple faith in God and in Christ and he points men to Jesus. He has his own way of doing this and no one can correct him. He disarms their criticism and wins them over to himself. He has the happy faculty of speaking deep spiritual truths and at the same time in a very pleasing and attractive way.

"Most people cannot get over the money matter in his case. Many cannot find work and cannot hold a job when they get it, and they cannot understand how a man can be right and surpass them in the money game. The fact is, this man has something to sell that the people want and are willing to pay for, and there are so many that want what he can give that the aggregate sum of their contributions is very considerable. I now see as I did not see before that he is not selfish altogether by any means in this matter of money. He can make \$1,000 a day and is offered that sum on the lecture platform through the season, and he was offered \$30,000 through the hot months of July and August, but he refused that this year.

"He will do a great deal of good in Omaha. Should he die today the sermons that he has preached will never be forgotten by those who heard him. If he lives to finish this meeting he will fill the brains of our people with thoughts and their hearts with determination which will bear fruit in time and eternity. If as professing Christians we would all humble ourselves before God and cry mightily to Him, Omaha would see a revival that would eclipse all his efforts in other places, and would cause the devils in hell to gnash their teeth, and the angels to wave their kerchiefs over the balustrades of glory."

Mayor Dahlman, Our Cowboy Mayor:

"It strikes me Sunday is a fellow who will put a lot of people to thinking, especially the young people. This slang they talk so much about does not offend. He evidently has figured out that he can reach all classes of people by the use of slang expressions. The sawdust trail—which some people think is only for the drunkard and fallen women—is just as much for the fellow who goes all week practicing hypocrisy and then goes to church on Sunday and expects to have his sins washed away by the minister in an hour and a half.

"'Billy' Sunday is absolutely in dead earnest. Every movement and expression he puts into his words impresses all who hear him. He means every word he says. He shoots big shells and does not waste his time with birdshot. If there is any chance to penetrate the hides of some people he will do it.

"I expect to hear him again. I will make him an official call at his hotel. He is the greatest man in the world in his line of work. His organization ideas are remarkable. I never saw a man who put so much energy into what he says. He called me 'Jim,' and that was his way. I enjoyed his humor."

Mrs. David Cole, Chairman Woman's Work Committee:

"'Billy' Sunday is a great man, and I really believe he is doing a great work. No, I took no offense at his manner of expressing himself. I felt that he spoke as he did in order to attract attention and hold his audience and to emphasize the points he wished to make. I think his gestures are for the same purpose. It is the very life of what he says.

"As for the work of the committees, I have never gone into anything on so large a scale before where there was better co-operation, less friction and more congenial workers than on these committees. Where there are a number of women working together there is generally some friction, but everyone is so imbued with the spirit of the work there is no room for disagreements. Many persons have come to me and asked for some work to do to help along."

Capt. H. H. Kline, Salvation Army:

"Believe me, Mr. Sunday's average was 1,000 last Sunday. He came to the 'bat three times and made a home run each time up. I think that 'Billy' Sunday was on the job every minute of the time. No matter what your opinion may be of the way he stands up to the plate, or of the way that he holds his bat, he sure steps out and meets the ball every time. To change the simile, he is a bunch of nerves and his wallops have the punch behind them; he is a judge of distance, and I didn't notice him falling short or failing to land in, any round.

"His methods may not appeal to the refined, cultured, self-contained and intellectual graduates of the modern university, but to some of us who are rubbing shoulders with the weakling and the outcast, the degenerate and the criminal, to some of us who come in contact with, work among and mingle with the common people, his methods are those which we know will get results. I said last winter when addressing the Woman's club that the great need of Omaha was a civic conscience, and, although the editor of The Bee dubbed the statement as 'clap-trap,' I am of the opinion that before 'Billy' Sunday leaves Omaha that newly aroused civic conscience will be a factor in the commercial, the financial, the social, the religious and the political life of Omaha."