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Billy Sunday, Baseball Evangelist

Bruce Burton in Collier's Weekly

It was more than 20 years ago that Billy Sunday himself hit the sawdust trail, on a warm Spring afternoon in Chicago. The trail in his case was Van Buren street, and it led straight into the old Pacific Garden Mission. He was right fielder then on that famous baseball aggregation captained by Pop Anson, that, bare-handed, guileless of glove or mask or chest protector, won its way into the championship—and most of the team was with him on that particular afternoon. Mike Kelly was there, and Ed Williamson, and Frank Flynn, heroes all, surrounded by the inevitable band of street-urchin worshippers. As they passed the battered door of the mission, the music of an old hymn, almost equally battered, drifted out into the warm sunshine. Billy stopped short, and wonderingly, jokingly, the crowd stopped too. He had heard that music a long time back, but its strains had not grown more familiar through the years. Now it struck into his soul with some strange compulsion. The crowd bantered a little and started to move on—but not Billy. Quietly he reached out his hand to each one of the group in turn. "Boys," he said, "I'm through. I'm going in." One laughed; one passed a rough jest; the rest stood still uncomprehending. And the old Billy Sunday was gone.

Sometimes in his sermons now he tells about it, and particularly about the next afternoon when he reported for practice at the old Southside grounds. At the gate he met Frank Flynn and braced himself for the ordeal that he knew to be inevitable. Frank came on slowly, looking searchingly into Billy's eyes, but there was no smile, no jest; instead a long handshake and "I'm glad you did it, Bill." Inside Pop Anson waited to extend his hand, and one by one his team mates followed quietly, without pretense. The angels that assist St. Peter at the gate could not have given a welcome more sincere. It was a surprise to Billy, almost a shock—but it helped. It gave him a new regard for the heart of the common man, a deeper respect for his God, who without the loss of a single day was busily at work on his side. For that is Billy's idea of God, that He is working for Billy Sunday just as hard and as long as Billy works for Him. Religion to Billy is not worth its name unless it has its sleeves rolled up; salvation and sweat, in his vocabulary, are words derived from the same common source.

Efficacy of Prayer on the Diamond.

It was his religion, working persistently at its job, that made him catch the long, far fly in the decisive game that week. A tremendous hit it was, in the crucial minute of the ninth inning—far out over right field, over the heads of the crowd, almost to the fence. As he ran back for it he could not tell that it was going to be almost impossible; he could feel the home crowd in the bleachers straining for him, could hear far off the faint encouragement of his team mates, and knew that the men on bases were running in sure confidence that the game was won. And still he ran, panting out the first prayer of his Christian life.

"O God," he said, "you know I'm playing on your team; if you're going to help me, come on now."

In a broad way it was a model for all the thousands of prayers that he has uttered since: they are all born on the run, out of a heart that is beating beyond the speed limit in an effort to help the prayers get answered. Faster the ball dropped, too fast; he knew that it would go just over his head and fall behind him. In one last tremendous effort he pushed his bare hand up into the air, there was a swift, smarting impact—and he fell over on his back—with the ball clutched tight in his fist. His prayer had been answered;

the game was won.

There followed in the life of Billy Sunday, convert, a series of long, hard years before he became Billy Sunday, evangelist. On Sundays he preached in a bus-league sort of fashion wherever he could get the chance and during the week he worked as a physical director in the Chicago Young Men's Christian Association, at a salary of \$75 a month. In these later days, when grateful communities sometimes reward him with \$10,000 or even \$12,000 for his six-weeks' work, and when critics of various degrees of sincerity taunt him for the money that he has accumulated, he looks back on these long years of obscurity and sacrifice. "I notice," he says, "that no one ever thought of calling me a grafter then."

His first meeting were held in the towns of 500 and 600 in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. He has always been afraid of the cities, but he was more afraid of them then. Besides, he had only six sermons; when he had preached them necessarily compelled him to bring the meetings to an abrupt close. And six sermons would not have touched a town of any considerable size; he would have been done and gone before the big community knew that he was started.

A Sunday meeting is not like any other gathering in the world. It is as carefully prepared for as a circus, as well staged as the "Garden of Allah." Out of the scores of invitations that are pressed upon him—and he has enough on file to keep him working continuously for the next 20 years, should he prove able to stand the strain that long—he selects those that come from communities where conditions are most favorable and where he can have united support. From the day of his acceptance he is monarch of that community, a tyrant whose wish must be executed to the last letter. The churches must close during his meetings; he will have no distraction; the religious life of the whole community must merge itself for six weeks in the great tabernacle which is erected for him. There must be a choir of at least 500 voices; finally—but first on the list as Billy submits it—there must be a regiment of Christian men and women who will pledge themselves to daily and nightly for the success of the meetings through all the weeks of preparation.

At one time, when he was holding services in a central Illinois city, a delegation came from a neighboring community to request his services there. He consented, with the understanding that the delegation would return and organize a band of 200 Christians who would begin at once to pray for his success. The time of the meeting arrived; Billy gathered the ministers around him and asked for the list of those who had been praying. Twenty—and they had promised 200! That night, in the closing prayer, Billy took the matter straight to Heaven in these words:

"Lord, you know when we were over here in the last meeting a bunch of these preachers came and asked us to come over to this sin-soaked town of theirs and help them out. And Lord, you remember that we promised to come if they would get together 200 folks to pray for the success of the meetings. And you remember they promised, Lord. Now we get here and what do we find—a measly little 20. Do you get it, Lord?—20. What do you think of that?"

One who dropped in through the roof in the midst of one of his sermons, finding him standing in the pulpit, or about to swing a chair crashing upon the floor of the platform, might have a moment's doubt as to what sort of an exhibition was in progress. But all doubt would be removed were he to remain through to the end. For there is sound Gospel in every sermon of Billy's—and truth, clothed in the language of the wayfaring man, to be

sure, but driven home with the unmatched energy of a soul fully consecrated to its task.

"I am going to fight the things that destroy manhood and womanhood and homes and decent business until hell freezes over," he announced in opening his meetings in Decatur, "and then I'll buy a pair of skates and fight on the ice. I ask no quarter, and I give none." It was not nice, not chaste, not beautiful, but it hit home to the hearts of the thousands who had traveled out to see what manner of man had come among them. After that they knew.

Read these paragraphs and imagine them spoken in a tense, husky tone by a man who leans far out over the pulpit, jumps onto the chair and off again, shoots his arms this way and that, and sweats great drops in the earnestness of his delivery.

"This revival means work for all of you. Don't you think that you are going to have an easy time of it. No, sir. Think of the mountains of guilt in your city that won't move for a little. Some one has got to sweat on this job."

"I was going to say that God couldn't convert a man on the top of the Alps, 400 miles from anyone else, but I won't say that, for God could do it, but He doesn't. I don't believe any man was ever converted without the human agency figuring in it. God don't send angels to Columbus to ring your doorbells, preach and sing in your choirs. No, sir; God said: 'Bill, you go down and pull off that stunt for me.'"

"Lots of you people wear out 10 pairs of holdbacks to one pair of tugs. What God wants is helpers, not knockers; builders, not iconoclasts. Half the church members could die and the Church wouldn't lose as a spiritual force. Yank some of the groans and stuffings out of your prayers and put in joy and work. There are three classes in every Church: the I wills, the I won'ts, and the I can'ts. The first class does all the work. Some men are so stingy that they can't give a dime to the Church without singing: 'God be with you till we meet again.'"

"The story of Moses is one of the most fascinating in Scripture. I believe the drigin of that ark which was hid in the bulrushes must have been in heaven, and that God whispered the plan of saving that baby into the ears of its mother. The angels in heaven were surely kept busy keeping harm away from that baby Moses."

"Thank God the angels were not out at some bridge-whist party. When I get to heaven I am going to hunt up the mother of Moses and ask her how much Pharaoh's daughter paid her to nurse her own baby."

"What is the Bible? Good news of salvation by faith in Jesus. But you say, 'Is it good news to tell me I am going to hell?'"

"If it's a fact that you are lost and on the road to hell the sooner you find it out the better for you—that's good news. And here's better news. You needn't go to hell; you can be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ."

"If ever a man looks like a consummate ass it's when he tells God that the plan of redemption doesn't meet with his intellectual approval."

"Do you think because you say there isn't any fire in hell that that turns the hose on it? Some of you men are so low down, degraded, and sunk that if you ever do go to hell you'll have to take a balloon."

"If God would let me go down to hell I could depopulate it in 15 minutes. It wouldn't take a six-weeks' campaign. Every man in hell would be glad to get out in five minutes if he could. Yet you break your fool neck to get in."

"You say there may be a hell. All right, I am going to get ready for the maybe."

It's Fourteenth Century theology, you say, and perhaps that's true. But there is no cant in it. It is the hard-hitting message of a strong man, stirred to the depths of his soul by the spectacle of puny, impotent, mortal men setting themselves in revolt against

the purpose of Almighty God. And men respond to it—the leading men of the city—editors, merchants, bankers, as well as the rank and file. No other evangelist owes so little of his success to emotionalism: none other can number a larger proportion of men than women on his convert rolls.

A Sensible Judge.

At the meeting of the Press Association in Asheville, Judge Thomas A. Jones represented the mayor of the city and delivered the address of welcome. Following is an extract from his remarks.

"Personally, I believe in the greatest liberty of the press. When I was judge of the criminal court of Buncombe the Asheville papers saw fit to criticize me severely. Some of my friends tried to persuade me to have a certain editor arrested for contempt, but I told them that I would do no such thing, for I believed as long as newspapers gave the facts about the case of a judge, or any other public officer, that they had a right to indulge in any criticism, however harsh it might be; that they had a perfect right to express the opinion that I was an unjust or tyrannical judge, or that my decisions were outrageous, I was a disgrace to the bench and should be impeached, and they had a perfect right to express their views, however much I naturally disliked or disagreed with them."

"Spoken like a man," says the Salisbury Post. Indeed it is. The public man who has so broad a conception of the liberty of the press is indeed rare.—Statesville Landmark.

North Carolina May Get Million Dollars.

Washington, Aug. 2.—Representative Webb was assured today by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury John Skelton Williams, that North Carolina would get a large slice of the \$50,000,000 loan which the government will make for the movement of crops. Charlotte, Mr. Williams said, was already on the list and would figure in the distribution. It is believed over \$1,000,000 will be placed at the disposal of the Tar Heel state banks for the movement of the cotton, tobacco and other crops in the state. Greensboro and Wilmington will also get a substantial amount, if the banks in these cities so desire.

Fourth sections orders were issued by the interstate commerce commission today as follows: Allowing a rate of 84 cents per hundred on traffic from Cincinnati and Louisville group to Reidsville and Ruffin. Establish rates on marble from Raleigh, N. C., to eastern Virginia cities, South Atlantic, Georgia and South Carolina towns and also rates on coal from Big Stone Gap to North Carolina points. All the rates applied for are lower than the published tariffs and they were granted for a period of six months.

Bolt Strikes Man and His Two Horses.

King, Aug. 2.—R. W. Newsom, who yesterday afternoon sought shelter from one of the worst storms ever experienced in this section, was instantly killed when lightning struck the tobacco barn to which he had gone. Two horses, with which he had been plowing and which he had taken to the barn with him, were also killed by the same bolt.

Mr. Newsom was one of the best citizens of the county, 35 years of age and is survived by a wife and two small children. He was a member of the Junior Order and his burial will be conducted by members of the local council.

Lightning also struck the residence of Mr. G. G. Boles, about a mile south of town, tearing up the living room, but it happened that none of the family was in this part of the house at the time. A strawstack on the farm of Mr. I. B. Stone was struck and burned.

The wind and hail which accompanied the electrical disturbance damaged crops to a considerable extent, tearing corn to pieces.

GOLDSBORO MAN HOME FROM MEXICO.

Talks Interestingly of Conditions in That Troubled Republic.

Greensboro, Aug. 2.—Mr. C. D. Brothers who has been engaged in railway construction work in Mexico, making his headquarters the city visiting his parents, Dr. and Mrs. J. E. Brothers at the State Hospital, leaving for this city from Mexico July 1.

In an interview Mr. Brothers gave some very interesting points in regard to the situation in Mexico at the time of his departure for the United States, and says that though a traveler would find very little gaiety in the troubled country these days, there are periods when frivolity is indulged in to a greater degree of excess than people in this country could deem possible, and at times the old world is made to smile whether willingly or otherwise.

Mr. Brothers says that press reports sent out from Mexico greatly exaggerated in the saying that there was no law and order observed in the country and that during the Administration of President Diaz law and order was in many instances more rigidly enforced than in the United States. Talking further of Diaz he stated that Diaz was a native of the State of Oaxaca, greatly inhabited by Indians, who were devoted to him and have done great damage in their State, saying they would never follow or recognize the present President Huerta, and will continue to go on the warpath from personal motives while he is in power. He says that acceptance of the new Administration in Mexico is not so general as at first thought, as the States of Coahuila, Sonora and Yucatan as well as Oaxaca have been in a state of uprising ever since the overthrow of Francisco Madero.

Mr. Brothers says that it is freely and openly discussed on the streets of Mexico that should the United States have war with that country, that she would not only have Mexico to contend with but also, Japan. That secret negotiations had been in progress between Japan and Mexico for quite a while, but as to the nature of same he could not state.

When asked if the people of Mexico were treated as slaves he stated that such reports were untrue, but says that since February, conditions have been going from bad to worse. He stated that President Huerta, in his opinion, would never be induced to resign and frankly threatens the people with the use of drastic means for the restoration of peace if necessary.

When asked about railway construction work in Mexico Mr. Brothers stated the Compania Constructora de Sombretete, who had the contract for the construction of the railroad from Canitas to Durango, has suspended all work. All of its employees have left the State. About 140 kilometers of track has been laid, and the road would have been completed in four months, but work had to be abandoned on account of the disturbed condition of the country.

While passing through the region of Sombretete, Mr. Brothers says he was informed that the rebels were not molesting the cattle on the ranches. They take horses, which they say they need for the campaign, and they kill heaves, and goats for food, but they do not drive away any stock. They confiscate arms where they are found, and force loans of money from merchants, miners, and stockmen very frequently, but says there is no wanton destruction of property.

Mr. Brothers says he was one among a party of 75, including several American women, who left Canitas to go to Zacatecas on coaches and on horseback. There were 45 Americans in the party, 14 foreigners, and the rest Mexicans. The distance between Canitas and Zacatecas by railroad is 111 kilometers but it was necessary for the party to make several detours which made it longer, the trip being made in two days and a half. It was necessary to make the trip across country due to the interruption of railway traffic and the suspension of work in the Canitas district.

When the party reached Zaca-

tecas the residents of the town gathered on the street corners to see them pass, all being glad to reach their destination and being surprised that they had not encountered more difficulties in the trip across the country.

While there Mr. Brothers says, the rebels under Panfilo Natera in the State of Zacatecas is in appeared on the outskirts of Sombretete, and as there were only 14 Federal soldiers in the town the inhabitants urged the garrison not to make a fight, but to permit the rebels to enter unmolested. This was agreed to and the rebels who numbered about 200 took possession of the town. Natera levied loans on the business men of the town, offering to give receipts if required, and in this manner collected about \$14,000. The rebels remained only a day and a half in the town and then left, Natera first appointing a jefe politico to manage the affairs of the town.

When asked if he intended returning to Mexico Mr. Brothers stated that it looked too much like war at present, but if war came he would rather see it with the United States, as it would be a great thing for Mexico, as there are miles and miles of uncultivated lands in Mexico, due to a law in that country that no man could be forced to pay a debt or work unless he so choseed to do so.

No Danger of a Panic.

Greensboro Record.

The announcement of the decision of the Secretary of the Treasury to place from \$25,000,000 to \$50,000,000 in the banks of the South and West for immediate use in the removal of crops, will bring relief to a situation which has not been highly satisfactory to those most familiar with the currents of the commercial world.

There is no doubt that the administration has determined at all hazards to exert the utmost of its financial strength to avert the danger of a panic or any violent disturbance of business conditions likely to follow the adoption of the present tariff bill. The country will accept in good faith this assurance from the administration and this assurance will largely allay all apprehension as to the effect of the tariff legislation.

But while this is true, there yet lingers a well-grounded fear that the power of the concentrated and organized interest so strongly backed by money in the hands or under the control of a few men may make trouble. This power has been acquired and the strings to it are in the hands of a few strong men and even the administration with all of the resources of the government, is powerless to wrest from these men their weapons of warfare.

However, it is hardly probable that conditions can be made any worse so long as the administration stands by its announced policy.

Mr. Secretary McAdoo tells us that he has \$500,000,000 in his jeans pocket ready to meet any emergency and that every dollar of it will be shelled out before the New York bankers shall be allowed to put us in bankruptcy.

With Uncle Sam at our back and the above-named amount in hands there is every good reason to hope for the best and no reason for apprehending any stringency in business or money matters generally. There is plenty of money in the country and there is a bountiful crop everywhere. Everybody ought to be hopeful and happy.

Judge Cooke and Pistol Toters

Judge Charles M. Cooke, who presided at the recent term of Wake Superior court, refused to fine any one convicted of carrying concealed weapons, believing that the only effective remedy for the pistol-toting habit is a term on the county roads. We know of no evil that calls for drastic treatment more than pistol toting, for it is the fruitful cause of breaches of the peace, homicides and murders. The man with a gun in his pocket is generally looking for trouble and does not seek to avoid it.—Webster's Weekly.