

THE STORY OF BILLY SUNDAY

William T. Ellis

These five chapters describe the beginning of the life and ministry of one of Christendom's most colorful characters, Billy Sunday. Born in 1862, Sunday was a professional baseball player and part-time fireman, when he was converted through the ministry of the Garden Mission in Chicago in 1886. In 1891 he began two years of service with the Chicago YMCA and in 1894-5 assisted J. Wilbur Chapman in the planning and promotion of large evangelistic crusades. From 1896 he launched out on his own as an itinerant evangelist until his death in 1935, during which time it is claimed that he won a million converts to Christ.

His success was due to a number of factors including advanced planning, superb organization, massive publicity, musical excellence, specialist ministries to businessmen, women, students and other sectional interests. Thousands of church members were recruited to assist a group of at least twenty specialists employed in the mechanics of city-wide crusade evangelism.

Sunday's sensational and flamboyant preaching style appealed to the masses who responded to his sometimes outrageous sermons on moral issues, especially the evils of alcohol.

Sunday can be described as a revivalist – a powerful and successful evangelist who used all the 'means' he could to see people converted – who occasionally saw signs of true revival.

Chapter I.

One of God's Tools

I want to be a giant for God. — BILLY SUNDAY.

HEAVEN often plays jokes on earth's worldly-wise. After the consensus of experience and sagacity has settled upon a certain course and type, lo, all the profundity of the sages is blown away as a speck of dust and we have, say, a shockingly unconventional John the Baptist, who does not follow the prescribed rules in dress, training, methods or message. John the Baptist was God's laugh at the rabbis and the Pharisees.

In an over-ecclesiastical age, when churchly authority had reached the limit, a poor monk, child of a miner's hut, without influence or favor, was called to break the power of the popes, and to make empires and reshape history, flinging his shadow far down the centuries. Martin Luther was God's laugh at ecclesiasticism.

While the brains and aristocracy and professional statesmanship of America struggled in vain with the nation's greatest crisis, God reached down close to the soil of the raw and ignored Middle West, and picked up a gaunt and untutored specimen of the common people — a man who reeked of the earth until the earth closed over him — and so saved the Union and freed a

race, through ungainly Abraham Lincoln. Thus again Heaven laughed at exalted procedure and conventionality.

In our own day, with its blatant worldly wisdom, with its flaunting prosperity, with its fashionable churchliness, with its flood of “advanced” theology overwhelming the pulpit, God needed a prophet, to call his people back to simple faith and righteousness. A nation imperiled by luxury, greed, love of pleasure and unbelief cried aloud for a deliverer. Surely this crisis required a great man, learned in all the ways of the world, equipped with the best preparation of American and foreign universities and theological seminaries, a man trained in ecclesiastical leadership, and approved and honored by the courts of the Church? So worldly wisdom decreed. But God laughed — and produced, to the scandal of the correct and conventional, Billy Sunday, a common man from the common people, who, like Lincoln, so wears the signs and savor of the soil that fastidious folk, to whom sweat is vulgar and to whom calloused hands are “bad form,” quite lose their suavity and poise in calling him “unrefined.”

That he is God’s tool is the first and last word about Billy Sunday. He is a “phenomenon” only as God is forever doing phenomenal things, and upsetting men’s best-laid plans. He is simply a tool of God. For a special work he is the special instrument. God called, and he answered. All the many owlsh attempts to “explain” Billy Sunday on psychological and sociological grounds fall flat when they ignore the fact that he is merely a handy man for the Lord’s present use.

God is still, as ever, confounding all human wisdom by snatching the condemned baby of a Hebrew slave out of Egypt’s river to become a nation’s deliverer; by calling a shepherd boy from his sheep to be Israel’s greatest warrior and king; and by sending his only-begotten Son to earth by way of a manger, and training him in a workingman’s home and a village carpenter shop. “My ways are not your ways,” is a remark of God, which he seems fond of repeating and illustrating.

There is no other explanation of Billy Sunday needed, or possible, than that he is God’s man sent in God’s time. And if God chooses the weak and foolish things of earth to confound the mighty, is not that but another one of his inscrutable ways of showing that he is God?

Why are we so confident that Billy Sunday is the Lord’s own man, when so many learned critics have declared the contrary? Simply because he has led more persons to make a public confession of discipleship to Jesus Christ than any other man for a century past. Making Christians is, from all angles, the greatest work in the world. Approximately two hundred and fifty thousand persons, in the past twenty-five years, have taken Sunday’s hand, in token that henceforth their lives belong to the Saviour.

That amazing statement is too big to be grasped at once. It requires thinking over. The huge total of dry figures needs to be broken up into its component parts of living human beings. Tens of thousands of those men were husbands — hundreds of whom had been separated from their wives and children by sin. Now, in reunited homes, whole families bless the memory of the man of God who gave them back husbands and fathers. Other tens of thousands were sons, over many of whom parents had long prayed and agonized. It would be hard to convince these mothers, whose sons have been given back to clean living and to Christian service, that there is anything

seriously wrong with Mr. Sunday's language, methods or theology. Business men who find that a Sunday revival means the paying up of the bad bills of old customers are ready to approve on this evidence a man whose work restores integrity in commercial relations.

Every conceivable type of humanity is included in that total of a quarter of a million of Sunday converts. The college professor, the prosperous business man, the eminent politician, the farmer, the lawyer, the editor, the doctor, the author, the athlete, the "man about town," the criminal, the drunkard, the society woman, the college student, the working man, the school boy and girl: the whole gamut of life is covered by the stream of humanity that has "hit the sawdust trail" — a phrase which has chilled the marrow of every theological seminary in the land. But the trail leads home to the Father's House.

One must reach into the dictionary for big, strong words in characterizing the uniqueness of Billy Sunday's work. So I say that another aspect of his success is fairly astounding. He, above all others in our time, has broken through the thick wall of indifference which separates the Church from the world. Church folk commonly avoid the subject of this great fixed gulf. We do not like to face the fact that the mass of mankind does not bother its head about conventional religious matters. Even the majority of churchgoers are blankly uninterested in the general affairs of religion. Sad to tell, our bishops and board secretaries and distinguished preachers are really only local celebrities. Their names mean nothing in newspaper offices or to newspaper readers: there are not six clergymen in the United States with a really national reputation. Each in his own circle, of locality or denomination, may be Somebody with a big S. But the world goes on unheeding. Great ecclesiastical movements and meetings are entirely unrecorded by the secular press. The Church's problem of problems is how to smash, or even to crack, the partition which shuts off the world from the church.

Billy Sunday has done that. He has set all sorts and conditions of men to talking about religion. Go to the lowest dive in New York's "Tenderloin" or in San Francisco's "Barbary Coast," and mention the name "Billy Sunday," and everybody will recognize it, and be ready to discuss the man and his message. Stand before a session of the American Philosophical Society and pronounce the words "Billy Sunday" and every one of the learned savants present will be able to talk about the man, even though few of them know who won last season's base-ball championship or who is the world's champion prize-fighter.

This is a feat of first magnitude. All levels of society have been made aware of Billy Sunday and his gospel. When the evangelist went to New York for an evening address, early in the year 1914, the throngs were so great that the police were overwhelmed by the surging thousands. Even Mr. Sunday himself could not obtain admittance to the meeting for more than half an hour. Andrew Carnegie could not get into the hall that bears his name. Probably a greater number of persons tried to hear this evangelist that night than were gathered in all the churches of greater New York combined on the preceding Sunday night. To turn thousands of persons away from his meetings is a common experience of Mr. Sunday. More than ten thousand, mostly men, tried in vain to get into the overcrowded Scranton tabernacle at a single session. Every thoughtful man or woman must be interested in the man who thus can make religion interesting to the common people.

The despair of the present-day Church is the modern urban center. Our generation had not seen a great city shaken by the gospel until Billy Sunday went to Pittsburgh. That he did it is the unanimous report of press and preachers and business men. Literally that whole city was stirred to its most sluggish depths by the Sunday campaign. No base-ball series or political campaign ever moved the community so deeply. Everywhere one went the talk was of Billy Sunday and his meetings. From the bell boys in the hotels to the millionaires in the Dusquesne Club, from the workmen in the mills and the girls in the stores, to the women in exclusive gatherings, Sunday was the staple of conversation.

Day by day, all the newspapers in the city gave whole pages to the Sunday meetings. The sermons were reported entire. No other topic ever had received such full attention for so long a time at the hands of the press as the Sunday campaign. These issues of the papers were subscribed for by persons in all parts of the land. Men and women were converted who never heard the sound of the evangelist's voice. This series of Pittsburgh meetings, more than anything else in his experience, impressed the power of Sunday upon the metropolitan centers of the nation at large; the country folk had long before learned of him.

Any tabulation of Mr. Sunday's influence must give a high place to the fact that he has made good press "copy": he has put religion on the front pages of the dailies; and has made it a present issue with the millions. Under modern conditions, no man can hope to evangelize America who has not also access to the columns of the newspapers. Within the memory of living men, no other man or agency has brought religion so powerfully and consecutively into the press as William A. Sunday, whom some of his scholarly critics have called "illiterate."

All of which proves the popular interest in vital, contemporaneous religion. Men's ears are dulled by the "shop talk" of the pulpit. They are weary of the worn platitudes of professional piety. Nobody cares for the language of Canaan, in which many ministers, with reverence for the dead past, have tried to enswathe the living truths of the Gospel, as if they were mummies. In the colloquial tongue of the common people, Jesus first proclaimed his gospel, and "the common people heard him gladly," although many of the learned and aristocratic ecclesiastics of his day were scandalized by his free and popular way of putting things, by his "common" stories, and by his disregard for the precedents of the schools. Whatever else may be said about Billy Sunday's much-discussed forms of speech, this point is clear, and denied by nobody: he makes himself and his message clearly understood by all classes of people. However much one may disagree with him, nobody fails to catch his meaning. He harnesses the common words of the street up to the chariot of divine truth. Every-day folk, the uncritical, unscholarly crowd of us, find no fault with the fact that Sunday uses the same sort of terms that we do. In fresh; vigorous, gripping style, he makes his message unmistakable.

College students like him as much as do the farmers and mechanics. In a single day's work at the University of Pennsylvania, when thousands of students crowded his meetings, and gave reverent, absorbed attention to his message, several hundred of them openly dedicated their lives to Christ, and in token thereof publicly grasped his hand. Dr. John R. Mott, the world's greatest student "You cannot fool a great body of students. They get a man's measure. If he is genuine, they know it, and if he is not, they quickly find it out. Their devotion to Mr. Sunday is very significant."

This man, who meets life on all levels, and proves that the gospel message is for no one particular class, is a distinctively American type. Somebody has said that the circus is the most democratic of American institutions: it brings all sorts and conditions of people together on a common plane and for a common purpose. The Sunday evangelistic meetings are more democratic than a circus. They are a singular exhibit of American life — perhaps the most distinctive gathering to be found in our land today. His appeal is to the great mass of the people. The housekeepers who seldom venture away from their homes, the mechanics who do not go to church, the “men about town” who profess a cynical disdain for religion, the “down and outs,” the millionaires, the society women, the business and professional men, the young fellows who feel “too big” to go to Sunday school — all these, and scores of other types, may be found night after night in the barn-like wooden tabernacles which are always erected for the Sunday meetings. Our common American life seems to meet and merge in this base-ball evangelist, who once erected tents for another evangelist, and now has to have special auditoriums built to hold his own crowds; and who has risen from a log cabin to a place of national power and honor. Nowhere else but in America could one find such an unconventional ‘figure as Billy Sunday.

Succeeding chapters will tell in some detail the story of the man and his work; and in most of them the man will speak his own messages. But for explanation of his power and his work it can only be said, as of old, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was” — Billy Sunday.

Chapter II **Up From the Soil**

If you want to drive the devil out of the world, hit him with a cradle instead of a crutch. — BILLY SUNDAY.

SUNDAY must be accepted as a man of the American type before he can be understood. He is of the average, every-day American sort. He is one of the “folks.” He has more points of resemblance to the common people than he has of difference from them. His mind is their mind. The keenness of the average American is his in an increased degree. He has the saving sense of humor which has marked this western people. The extravagances and recklessnesses of his speech would be incredible to a Britisher; but we Americans understand them. They are of a piece with our minds.

Like the type, Sunday is not over-fastidious, He is not made of a special porcelain clay, but of the same red soil as the rest of us. He knows the barn-yards of the farm better than the drawing-rooms of the rich. The normal, every-day Americanism of this son of the Middle West, whom the nation knows as “Billy Sunday,” is to be insisted upon if he is to be understood.

Early apprenticed to hardship and labor, he has a sympathy with the life of the toiling people which mere imagination cannot give. His knowledge of the American crowd is sure and complete because he is one of them. He understands the life of every-day folk because that has always been his life. While he has obvious natural ability, sharpened on the grindstone of varied experience, his perceptions and his viewpoints are altogether those of the normal American. As he has seen something of life on many levels, and knows city ways as well as country usages, he has never lost his bearings as to what sort of people make up the bulk of this country. To them

his sermons are addressed. Because he strikes this medium level of common conduct and thought, it is easy for those in all the ranges of American life to comprehend him.

“Horse-sense,” that fundamental American virtue, is Sunday’s to an eminent degree. A modern American philosopher defines this quality of mind as “an instinctive something that tells us when the clock strikes twelve.” Because he is “rich in saving common sense,” Sunday understands the people and trusts them to understand him. His most earnest defenders from the beginning of his public life have been the rank and file of the common people. His critics have come from the extreme edges of society — the scholar, or the man whose business is hurt by righteousness.

The life of William A. Sunday covers the period of American history since the Civil War. He never saw his father, for he was born the third son of pioneer parents on November 19, 1862, four months after his father had enlisted as a private in Company E, Twenty-third Iowa Infantry Volunteers.

There is nothing remarkable to record as to the family. They were one with the type of the middle-western Americans who wrested that empire from the wilderness, and counted poverty honorable. In those mutually helpful, splendidly independent days, Democracy came to its flower, and the American type was born.

Real patriotism is always purchased at a high price; none pay more dearly for war-time loyalty than the women who send their husbands and sons to the front. Mrs. Sunday bade her husband answer the call of his country as only a brave woman could do, and sent him forth to the service and sacrifices which soon ended in an unmarked grave. Four months after she had bidden farewell to her husband, she bade welcome to his son. To this third child she gave the name of her absent soldier husband.

The mother’s dreams of the returning soldier’s delight in his namesake child were soon shattered by the tidings that Private William Sunday had died of disease contracted in service, at Patterson, Missouri, on December 22, 1862, a little more than a month after the birth of the boy who was to lift his name out of the obscurity of the hosts of those who gave “the last full measure of devotion” to their nation.

Then the mother was called upon to take up that heaviest of all burdens of patriotism — the rearing of an orphan family in a home of dire poverty. The three children in the Sunday home out at Ames, Iowa — Roy, Edward and William — were unwitting participants in another aspect of war, the lot of soldiers’ orphans. For years, Mrs. Sunday, who at this writing is still living and rejoicing in the successes of her son, was able to keep her little family together under the roof of the two-roomed log cabin which they called home. In those early days their grandfather, Squire Corey, was of unmeasured help in providing for and training the three orphan boys.

Experience is a school teacher who carries a rod, as Sunday could well testify. He learned life’s fundamental lessons in the school of poverty and toil. To the part which his mother played in shaping his life and ideals he has borne eloquent tribute on many platforms. When the youngest son was twelve years old, he and his older brother were sent off to the Soldiers’ Orphanage at Glenwood, Iowa. Later they were transferred to the Davenport Orphanage, which they left in

June of 1876; making two years spent in the orphanages. Concerning this experience Sunday himself speaks: "I was bred and born (not in old Kentucky, although my grandfather was a Kentuckian), but in old Iowa. I am a rube of the rubes. I am a hayseed of the hayseeds, and the malodors of the barnyard are on me yet, and it beats Pinaud and Colgate, too. I have greased my hair with goose grease and blacked my boots with stove blacking. I have wiped my old proboscis with a gunny-sack towel; I have drunk coffee out of my saucer, and I have eaten with my knife; I have said 'done it,' when I should have said 'did it,' and I 'have saw' when I should 'have seen,' and I expect to go to heaven just the same. I have crept and crawled out from the university of poverty and hard knocks, and have taken postgraduate courses.

"My father went to the war four months before I was born, in Company E, Twenty-third Iowa. I have butted and fought and struggled since I was six years old. That's one reason why I wear that little red, white and blue button. I know all about the dark and seamy side of life, and if ever a man fought hard, I have fought hard for everything I have ever gained.

"The wolf scratched at the cabin door and finally mother said: 'Boys, I am going to send you to the Soldiers' Orphans' Home. At Ames, Iowa, we had to wait for the train, and we went to a little hotel, and they came about one o'clock and said: 'Get ready for the train.'

"I looked into mother's face. Her eyes were red, her hair was disheveled. I said: 'What's the matter, mother?' All the time Ed and I slept mother had been praying. We went to the train; she put one arm about me and the other about Ed and sobbed as if her heart would break. People walked by and looked at us, but they didn't say a word.

"Why? They didn't know, and if they had they wouldn't have cared. Mother knew; she knew that for years she wouldn't see her boys. We got into the train and said, 'Good-bye, mother,' as the train pulled out. We reached Council Bluffs. It was cold and we turned up our coats and shivered. We saw the hotel and went up and asked the woman for something to eat. She said:, 'What's your name?'

"My name is William Sunday, and this is my brother Ed.'

"Where are you going?'

"She wiped her tears and said: 'My husband was a soldier and he never came back. He wouldn't turn any one away and I wouldn't turn you boys away.' She drew her arms about us and said: 'Come on in.' She gave us our breakfast and our dinner, too. There wasn't any train going out on the 'Q' until afternoon. We saw a freight train standing there so we climbed into the caboose.

"The conductor came along and said: 'Where's your money or ticket?'

"Ain't got any."

"I'll have to put you off."

“We commenced to cry. My brother handed him a letter of introduction to the superintendent of the orphans’ home. The conductor read it, and handed it back as the tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he said: ‘Just sit still, boys. It won’t cost a cent to ride on my train.’

“It’s only twenty miles from Council Bluffs to Glenwood, and as we rounded the curve the conductor said: ‘There it is on the hill.’

“I want to say to you that one of the brightest pictures that hangs upon the walls of my memory is the recollection of the days when as a little boy, out in the log cabin on the frontier of Iowa, I knelt by mother’s side.

“I went back to the old farm some years ago. The scenes had changed about the place. Faces I had known and loved had long since turned to dust. Fingers that used to turn the pages of the Bible were obliterated and the old trees beneath which we boys used to play and swing had been felled by the woodman’s axe. I stood and thought. The man became a child again and the long weary nights of sin and of hardships became as though they never had been.

“Once more with my gun on my shoulder and my favorite dog trailing at my heels I walked through the pathless wood and sat on the old familiar logs and stumps, and as I sat and listened to the wild, weird harmonies of nature, a vision of the past opened. The squirrel from the limb of the tree barked defiantly and I threw myself into an interrogation point, and when the gun cracked, the squirrel fell at my feet. I grabbed him and ran home to throw him down and receive compliments for my skill as a marksman. And I saw the tapestry of the evening fall. I heard the lowing herds and saw them wind slowly o’er the lea and I listened to the tinkling bells that lulled the distant fowl. Once more I heard the shouts of childish glee. Once more I climbed the haystack for the hen’s eggs. Once more we crossed the threshold and sat at our frugal meal. Once more mother drew the trundle bed out from under the larger one, and we boys, kneeling down, shut our eyes and clasping our little hands, said: ‘Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord, my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take. And this I ask for Jesus’ sake, Amen.’

‘Backward, turn backward, O time in thy flight,
 Make me a child again, just for tonight,
 Mother, come back from that echoless shore,
 Take me again to your heart as of yore.
 Into the old cradle I’m longing to creep,
 Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.’

“I stood beneath the old oak tree and it seemed to carry on a conversation with me. It seemed to say:

“‘Hello Bill. Is that you?’ “

‘Yes, it’s I, old tree.’

“Well, you’ve got a bald spot on the top of your head. “Won’t you climb up and sit on my limbs as you used to?”

“No, I haven’t got time now. I’d like to, though, awfully well.’

“Don’t go, Bill. Don’t you remember the old swing you made?”

“Yes, I remember; but I’ve got to go.’

“Say Bill, don’t you remember when you tried to play George Washington and the cherry tree and almost cut me down? That’s the scar you made, but it’s almost covered over now.’

“Yes, I remember all, but I haven’t time to stay.’

“Are you comin’ back, Bill?”

“I don’t know, but I’ll never forget you.’

“Then the old apple tree seemed to call me and I said:

‘I haven’t time to wait, old apple tree.’

“I want to go back to the orchard,
The orchard that used to be mine,
The apples are reddening and filling
The air with their wine.
I want to run on through the pasture
And let down the dusty old bars,
I want to find you there still waiting,
Your eyes like the twin stars.
Oh, nights, you are weary and dreary,
And days, there is something you lack;
To the farm in the valley,
I want to go back.’

“I tell it to you with shame, I stretched the elastic bands of my mother’s love until I thought they would break. I went far into the dark and the wrong until I ceased to hear her prayers or her pleadings. I forgot her face, and I went so far that it seemed to me that one more step and the elastic bands of her love would break and I would be lost. But, thank God, friends, I never took that last step. Little by little I yielded to the tender memories and recollections of my mother; little by little I was drawn away from the yawning abyss, and twenty-seven years ago, one dark and stormy night in Chicago, I groped my way out of darkness into the arms of Jesus Christ and I fell on my knees and cried ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’”

Of formal education the boy Sunday had but little. He went to school intermittently, like most of his playmates, but he did get into the high school, although he was never graduated. Early in life he began to work for his living, even before he went off to the Soldiers’ Orphanage. Concerning

these periods of early toil he himself has spoken as follows: “When I was about fourteen years old, I made application for the position of janitor in a school.

“I used to get up at two o’clock, and there were fourteen stoves and coal had to be carried for all them. I had to keep the fire up and keep up my studies and sweep the floors. I got twenty-five dollars a month salary. Well, one day I got a check for my salary and I went right down to the bank to get it cashed. Right in front of me was another fellow with a check to be cashed, and he shoved his in, and I came along and shoved my check in, and he handed me out forty dollars. My check called for twenty-five dollars. I called on a friend of mine who was a lawyer in Kansas City and told him. I said: ‘Frank, what do you think, Jay King handed me forty dollars and my check only called for twenty-five dollars.’ He said, ‘Bill, if I had your luck, I would buy a lottery ticket.’ But I said, ‘The fifteen dollars is not mine.’ He said, ‘Don’t be a chump. If you were shy ten dollars and you went back you would not get it, and if they hand out fifteen dollars, don’t be a fool, keep it.’

“Well, he had some drag with me and influenced me. I was fool enough to keep it, and I took it and bought a suit of clothes. I can see that suit now; it was a kind of brown, with a little green in it and I thought I was the goods, I want to tell you, when I got those store clothes on. That was the first suit, of store clothes I had ever had, and I bought that suit and I had twenty-five dollars left after I did it.

“Years afterwards I said, ‘I ought to be a Christian,’ and I got on my knees to pray, and the Lord seemed to touch me on the back and say, ‘Bill, you owe that Farmers’ Bank fifteen dollars with interest,’ and I said, ‘Lord, the bank don’t know that I got that fifteen dollars,’ and the Lord said ‘I know it’; so I struggled along for years, probably like some of you, trying to be decent and honest and right some wrong that was in my life, and every time I got down to pray the Lord would say, ‘Fifteen dollars with interest, Nevada County, Iowa; fifteen dollars, Bill.’ So years afterwards I sent that money back, enclosed a check, wrote a letter and acknowledged it, and I have the peace of God from that day to this, and I have never swindled anyone out of a dollar.”

There are other kinds of education besides those which award students a sheepskin at the end of a stated term. Sunday has no sheepskin — neither has he the sheep quality which marks the machine-made product of any form of training. His school has been a diversity of work, where he came face to face with the actualities of life. He early had to shift for himself. He learned the priceless lesson of how to work, regardless of what the particular task might be, whether it was scrubbing floors (and he was an expert scrubber of floors!), or preaching a sermon to twenty thousand persons. He had a long hard drill in working under authority: that is why he is able to exercise authority like a major-general. Because personally he has experienced, with all of the sensitiveness of an American small boy, the bitter injustice of over-work and under-pay under an oppressive task-master, he is a voice for the toilers of the world. In this same diversified school of industry he learned the lesson of thoroughness which is now echoed by every spike in his tabernacle and every gesture in his sermons. Such a one as he could not have come from a conventional educational course. It needed this hard school to make such a hardy man.

It was while a youth in Marshalltown, Iowa, playing base ball on the lots, that Sunday came to his own. Captain A. C. Anson, the famous leader of the Chicago “White Sox,” chanced to see the

youth of twenty, whose phenomenal base-running had made him a local celebrity. It is no new experience for Sunday to be a center of public interest. He has known this since boyhood. The local base-ball "hero" is as big a figure in the eyes of his own particular circle as ever a great evangelist gets to be in the view of the world. Because his ears early became accustomed to the huzzahs of the crowd, Sunday's head has not been turned by much of the foolish adulation which has been his since he became an evangelist.

A level head, a quick eye, and a body which is such a finely trained instrument that it can meet all drafts upon it, is part of Sunday's inheritance from his life on the baseball diamond.

Most successful base-ball players enter the major leagues by a succession of steps. With Sunday it was quite otherwise. Because he fell under the personal eye of "Pop" Anson he was borne directly from the fields of Marshall-town, Iowa, to the great park of the Chicago team. That was in 1883, when Sunday was not yet twenty-one years of age. His mind was still formative — a quality it retains to this day — and his entrance into the larger field of base ball trained him to think in broad terms. It widened his horizon and made him reasonably indifferent to the comments of the crowds.

A better equipment for the work he is doing could not have been found; for above all else Sunday "plays ball." While others discuss methods and bewail conditions he keeps the game going. Such a volume of criticism as no other evangelist, within the memory of living men, has ever received, has fallen harmless from his head, because he has not turned aside to argue with the umpire, but has "played ball."

There is no call for tears or heroics over the early experiences of Sunday. His life was normal; no different from that of tens of thousands of other American boys. He himself was in no wise a phenomenon. He was possessed of no special abilities or inclinations. He came to his preaching gift only after years of experience in Christian work. It is clear that a Divine Providence utilized the very ordinariness of his life and training to make him an ambassador to the common people.

Chapter III **A Base-Ball "Star"**

Don't get chesty over success. — BILLY SUNDAY

SOMETIMES the preacher tells his people what a great journalist he might have been, or what a successful business man, had he not entered the ministry; but usually his hearers never would have suspected it if he had not told them. Billy Sunday's eminence as a base-ball player is not a shadow cast backward from his present preeminence. His success as a preacher has gained luster from his distinction as a base-ball player, while his fame as a baseball player has been kept alive by his work as an evangelist.

All the world of base-ball enthusiasts, a generation ago, knew Billy Sunday, the speediest base-runner and the most daring base-stealer in the whole fraternity. Wherever he goes today veteran devotees of the national game recall times they saw him play; and sporting periodicals and

sporting pages of newspapers have been filled with reminiscences from base-ball “fans,” of the triumphs of the evangelist on the diamond.

A side light on the reality of his religion while engaged in professional base ball is thrown by the fact that sporting writers always speak of him with pride and loyalty, and his old base-ball associates who still survive, go frequently to hear him preach. The base-ball world thinks that he reflects distinction on the game.

Now base ball in Marshalltown and base ball in Chicago had not exactly the same standards. The recruit had to be drilled. He struck out the first thirteen times he went to bat. He never became a superior batter, but he could always throw straight and hard. At first he was inclined to take too many chances and his judgment was rather unsafe. One base-ball writer has said that “Sunday probably caused more wide throws than any other player the game has ever known, because of his specialty of going down to first like a streak of greased electricity. When he hit the ball infielders yelled ‘hurry it up.’ The result was that they often threw them away.” He was the acknowledged champion sprinter of the National League. This once led to a match race with Arlie Latham, who held like honors in the American League. Sunday won by fifteen feet.

Sunday was the sort of figure the bleachers liked. He was always eager — sometimes too eager — to “take a chance.” What was a one-base hit for another man was usually good for two bases for him. His slides and stolen bases were adventures beloved of the “fans” — the spice of the game. He also was apt in retort to the comments from the bleachers, but always good-natured. The crowds liked him, even as did his team mates.

Sunday was a man’s man, and so continues to this day. His tabernacle audiences resemble base-ball crowds in the proportion of men present, more nearly than any other meetings of a religious nature that are regularly being held. Sunday spent five years on the old Chicago team, mostly playing right or center field. He was the first man in the history of base ball to circle the bases in fourteen seconds. He could run a hundred yards from a standing start in ten seconds flat. Speed had always been his one distinction. As a lad of thirteen, in the Fourth of July games at Ames, he won a prize of three dollars in a foot-race, a feat which he recalls with pleasure.

Speed is a phase of base-ball that, being clear to all eyes, appeals to the bleachers. So it came about that Sunday was soon a base-ball “hero,” analogous to “Ty” Cobb or “Home-Run” Baker, or Christy Mathewson of our own day. He himself tells the story of one famous play, on the day after his conversion:

“That afternoon we played the old Detroit club. We were neck and neck for the championship. That club had Thompson, Richardson, Rowe, Dunlap, Hanlon and Bennett, and they could play ball.

“I was playing right field. Mike Kelly was catching and John G. Clarkson was pitching. He was as fine a pitcher as ever crawled into a uniform. There are some pitchers today, O’Toole, Bender, Wood, Mathewson, Johnson, Marquard, but I do not believe any one of them stood in the class with Clarkson.

“Cigarettes put him on the burn. When he’d taken a bath the water would be stained with nicotine.

“We had two men out and they had a man on second and one on third and Bennett, their old catcher, was at bat. Charley had three balls and two strikes on him. Charley couldn’t hit a high ball: but he could kill them when they went about his knee.

“I hollered to Clarkson and said: ‘One more and we got ‘em.’

“You know every pitcher puts a hole in the ground where he puts his foot when he is pitching. John stuck his foot in the hole and he went clean to the ground. Oh, he could make ‘em dance. He could throw over-handed, and the ball would go down and up like that. He is the only man on earth I have seen do that. That ball would go by so fast that the batter could feel the thermometer drop two degrees as she whizzed by. John went clean down, and as he went to throw the ball his right foot slipped and the ball went low instead of high.

“I saw Charley swing hard and heard the bat hit the ball with a terrific boom. Bennett had smashed the ball on the nose. I saw the ball rise in the air and knew that it was going clear over my head.

“I could judge within ten feet of where the ball would light. I turned my back to the ball and ran.

“The field was crowded with people and I yelled, ‘Stand back!’ and that crowd opened as the Red Sea opened for the rod of Moses. I ran on, and as I ran I made a prayer; it wasn’t theological, either, I tell you that. I said, ‘God, if you ever helped mortal man, help me to get that ball, and you haven’t very much time to make up your mind, either.’ I ran and jumped over the bench and stopped.

“I thought I was close enough to catch it. I looked back and saw it was going over my head and I jumped and shoved out my left hand and the ball hit it and stuck. At the rate I was going the momentum carried me on and I fell under the feet of a team of horses. I jumped up with the ball in my hand. Up came Tom Johnson. Tom used to be mayor of Cleveland. He’s dead now.

‘Here is \$10, Bill. Buy yourself the best hat in Chicago. That catch won me \$1,500. Tomorrow go and buy yourself the best suit of clothes you can find in Chicago.’

“An old Methodist minister said to me a few years ago, ‘Why, William, you didn’t take the \$10, did you?’ I said, ‘You bet your life I did.’

After his five years with the Chicago base-ball team, Sunday played upon the Pittsburgh and the Philadelphia teams, his prestige so growing with the years that after he had been eight years in base ball, he declined a contract at five hundred dollars a month, in order to enter Christian work.

For most of his base-ball career Sunday was an out-and-out Christian. He had been converted in 1887, after four years of membership on the Chicago team. He had worked at his religion; his team mates knew his Christianity for the real thing. On Sundays, because of his eminence as a base-ball player, he was in great demand for Y.M.C.A. talks. The sporting papers all alluded

frequently to his religious interests and activities. Because of his Christian scruples he refused to play base ball on Sunday. During the four years of his experience as a Christian member of the base-ball profession it might have been clear to anybody who cared to study the situation carefully that the young man's interest in religion was steadily deepening and that he was headed toward some form of avowedly Christian service.

"I had a three-year contract with Philadelphia. I said to God, 'Now if you want me to quit playing ball and go into evangelistic work, then you get me my release,' and so I left it with God to get my release before the 25th day of March and would take that as an evidence that he wanted me to quit playing ball.

"On the 17th day of March, St. Patrick's day — I shall never forget it — I was leading a meeting and received a letter from Colonel Rogers, president of the Philadelphia club, stating I could have my release.

"In came Jim Hart, of the Cincinnati team, and up on the platform and pulled out a contract for \$3,500. A player only plays seven months, and he threw the check down for \$500, the first month's salary in advance. He said, 'Bill, sign up!' But I said, 'No!' I told him that I told God if he wanted me to quit playing ball to get my release before the 25th day of March and I would quit.

"There I was up against it. I went around to some of my friends and some said, 'Take it!' Others said, 'Stick to your promise.' I asked my father-in-law about it, and he said, 'You are a blank fool if you don't take it.' I went home and went to bed, but could not sleep, and prayed that night until five o'clock, when I seemed to get the thing straight and said, 'No, sir, I will not do it.'

"I went to work for the Y.M.C.A. and had a very hard time of it. It was during those hard times that I hardly had enough to pay my house rent, but I stuck to my promise."

It was in March of 1891 that Sunday made the decision which marked the parting of the ways for him. He abandoned base ball forever as a profession, although not as an interest, and entered upon definite religious work. He accepted a position in the Chicago Y.M.C.A. as a subordinate secretary at \$83.33 per month — and sometimes this was six months overdue.

The stuff of which the young man's moral character was made is revealed by the fact that he deliberately rejected a \$500-a-month base-ball contract in order to serve Christ at a personal sacrifice. This incident reveals the real temper of Sunday, and is to be borne in mind when discussion is raised concerning the large offerings which are made to him now in his successful evangelistic work. That act was not the deed of a money-loving man. If it does not spell consecration, it is difficult to define what it does mean.

Doubtless there were many who thought this ending of a conspicuous base-ball career an anti-climax, even as the flight of Moses into the wilderness of Sinai apparently spelled defeat. Out of such defeats and sacrifices as these grow the victories that best serve the world and most honor God.

Chapter IV A Curbstone Recruit

You've got to sign your own Declaration of Independence before you can celebrate your Fourth of July victory. — BILLY SUNDAY

NOBODY this side of heaven can tell to whom the credit belongs for any great life or great work. But we may be reasonably sure that the unsung and unknown women of the earth have a large part in every achievement worth while.

Mrs. Clark, saintly wife of Colonel Clark, the devoted founder of the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission in Chicago, is one of that host of women who, like the few who followed Jesus in his earthly ministry, have served in lowly, inconspicuous ways, doing small tasks from a great love. Night after night, with a consecration which never flagged, she labored in the gospel for a motley crowd of men and women, mostly society's flotsam and jetsam, many of whom found this hospitable building the last fort this side of destruction.

A single visit to a down-town rescue mission is romantic, picturesque and somewhat of an adventure — a sort of sanctified slumming trip. Far different is it to spend night after night, regardless of weather or personal feelings, in coming to close grips with sin-sodden men and women, many of them the devil's refuse. A sickening share of the number are merely seeking shelter or lodging or food: sin's wages are not sufficient to live upon, and they turn to the mercy of Christianity for succor. Never to be cast down by unworthiness or ingratitude, to keep a heart of hope in face of successive failures, and to rejoice with a shepherd's joy over the one rescued — this is the spirit of the consecrated rescue-mission worker.

Such a woman was Mrs. Clark, the spiritual mother to a multitude of redeemed men. Of all the trophies which she has laid at the feet of her Lord, the redemption of Billy Sunday seems to human eyes the brightest. For it was this woman who persuaded him to accept Christ as his Saviour: he whose hand has led perhaps a quarter of a million persons to the foot of the Cross was himself led thither by this saintly woman.

When we contemplate the relation of that one humble rescue mission in Chicago, the monument of a business man's consecration to Christ, to the scores of Sunday Tabernacles over the land; and when we connect the streams of penitents on the "sawdust trail" with that one young man of twenty-five going forward up the aisle of the rude mission room, we realize afresh that God uses many workers to carry on his one work; and that though Paul may plant and Apollos water, it is God alone who giveth the increase.

It was one evening in the fall of 1887 that Sunday, with five of his base-ball team mates, sat on the curbstone of Van Buren Street and listened to the music and testimonies of a band of workers from the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission. The deeps of sentiment inherited from a Christian mother, and the memories of a Christian home, were stirred in the breast of one of the men; and Sunday accepted the invitation of a worker to visit the mission. Moved by the vital testimonies which he heard, he went again and again; and at length, after conversation and prayer with Mrs. Clark, he made the great decision which committed him to the Christian life.

Sunday's own story of his conversion is one of the most thrilling of all the evangelist's messages. It is a human document, a leaf in that great book of Christian evidences which God is still writing day by day.

"Twenty--seven years ago I walked down a street in Chicago in company with some ball players who were famous in this world — some of them are dead now — and we went into a saloon. It was Sunday afternoon and we got tanked up and then went and sat down on a corner. I never go by that street without thanking God for saving me. It was a vacant lot at that time. We sat down on a curbing. Across the street a company of men and women were playing on instruments — horns, flutes and slide trombones — and the others were singing the gospel hymns that I used to hear my mother sing back in the log cabin in Iowa and back in the old church where I used to go to Sunday school.

"And God painted on the canvas of my recollection and memory a vivid picture of the scenes of other days and other faces.

"Many have long since turned to dust. I sobbed and sobbed and a young man stepped out and said, 'We are going down to the Pacific Garden Mission. Won't you come own to the mission? I am sure you will enjoy it. You can hear drunkards tell how they have been saved and girls tell how they have been saved from the red-light district.'

"I arose and said to the boys, 'I'm through. I am going to Jesus Christ. We've come to the parting of the ways,' and I turned my back on them. Some of them laughed and some, of them mocked me; one of them gave me encouragement; others never said a word.

'Twenty-seven years ago I turned and left that little group on the corner of State and Madison Streets and walked to the little mission and fell on my knees and staggered out of sin and into the arms of the Saviour.

"The next day I had to get out to the ball park and practice. Every morning at ten o'clock we had to be out there. I never slept that night. I was afraid of the horse-laugh that gang would give me because I had taken my stand for Jesus Christ.

"I walked down to the old ball grounds. I will never forget it. I slipped my key into the wicket gate and the first man to meet me after I got inside was Mike Kelly.

"Up came Mike Kelly; he said, 'Bill, I'm proud of you! Religion is not my long suit, but I'll help you all I can.' Up came Anson, the best ball player that ever played the game; Pfeffer, Clarkson, Flint, Jimmy McCormick, Burns, Williamson and Dalrymple. There wasn't a fellow in that gang who knocked; every fellow had a word of encouragement for me.

"Mike Kelly was sold to Boston for \$10,000. Mike got half of the purchase price. He came up to me and showed me a check for \$5,000. John L. Sullivan, the champion fighter, went around with a subscription paper and the boys raised over \$12,000 to buy Mike a house.

“They gave Mike a deed to the house and they had \$1,500 left and gave him a certificate of deposit for that.

“His salary for playing with Boston was \$4,700 a year. At the end of that season Mike had spent the \$5,000 purchase price and the \$4,700 he received as salary and the \$1,500 they gave him and had a mortgage on the house. And when he came in Pennsylvania they went around with a subscription to get money enough to put him in the ground, and each club, twelve in all, in the two leagues gave a month a year to his wife. Mike sat here on the corner with me twenty-seven years ago, when I said, ‘Good-bye, boys, I’m going to Jesus Christ.’

“A. G. Spalding signed up a team to go around the world. I was the second he asked to sign a contract and Captain Anson was the first. I was sliding to second base one day. I always slid head first, and hit a stone and cut a ligament loose in my knee.

“I got Dr. Magruder, who attended Garfield when he was shot, and he said; “‘William, if you don’t go on that trip I will give you a good leg.’ I obeyed and have as good a leg today as I ever had. They offered to wait for me at Honolulu and Australia. Spalding said, ‘Meet us in England, and play with us through England, Scotland and Wales.’ I didn’t go.

“Ed Williamson, our old short-stop, a fellow weighing 225 pounds, was the most active big man you ever saw. He went with them, and while they were on the ship crossing the English channel a storm arose and the captain thought the ship would go down. Williamson tied two life-preservers on himself and one on his wife and dropped on his knees and prayed and promised God to be true. God spoke and the waves were stilled. They came back to the United States and Ed came back to Chicago and started a saloon on Dearborn Street. I would go through there giving tickets for the Y.M.C.A. meetings and would talk with them and he would cry like a baby.

“I would get down and pray for him, and would talk with him. When he died they put him on the table and cut him open and took out his liver and it was so big it would not go in a candy bucket. Kidneys had shriveled until they were like two stones.

“Ed Williamson sat there on the street corner with me, drunk, twenty-seven years ago when I said, ‘Good-bye, I’m going to Jesus Christ.’

“Frank Flint, our old catcher, who caught for nineteen years, drew \$3,200 a year on an average. He caught before they had chest protectors, masks and gloves. He caught bare-handed. Every bone in the ball of his hand was broken. You never saw such a hand as Frank had. Every bone in his face was broken, and his nose and cheek bones, and the shoulder and ribs had all been broken. He got to drinking, his home was broken up and he went to the dogs.

“I’ve seen old Frank Flint sleeping on a table in a stale beer joint and I’ve turned my pockets inside out and said, ‘You’re welcome to it, old pal.’ He drank on and on, and one day in winter he staggered out of a stale beer joint and stood on a corner, and was seized with a fit of coughing. The blood streamed out of his nose, mouth and eyes. Down the street came a wealthy woman. She took one look and said, ‘My God, is it you, Frank?’ and his wife came up and kissed him.

“She called two policemen and a cab and started with him to her boarding house. They broke all speed regulations. She called five of the best physicians and they listened to the beating of his

heart, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, and the doctors said., 'He will be dead in about four hours.' She told them to tell him what they had told her. She said, 'Frank, the end is near,' and he said, 'Send for Bill.'

"They telephoned me and I came. He said, 'There's nothing in the life of years ago I care for now. I can hear the bleachers cheer when I make a hit that wins the game. But there is nothing that can help me out now; and if the umpire calls me out now, won't you say a few words over me, Bill?' He struggled as he had years ago on the diamond, when he tried to reach home, but the great Umpire of the universe yelled, 'You're out!' and waved him to the club house, and the great gladiator of the diamond was no more.

"He sat on the street corner with me, drunk, twenty-seven years ago in Chicago, when I said, 'Good-bye, boys, I'm through.'

"Did they win the game of life or did Bill?"

Chapter V Playing the New Game

It is not necessary to be in a big place to do big things. — BILLY SUNDAY

IF Billy Sunday had not been an athlete he would not today be the physical marvel in the pulpit that he is; if he had not been reared in the ranks of the plain people he would not have possessed the vocabulary and insight into life which are essential parts of his equipment; if he had not served a long apprenticeship to toil he would not display his present pitiless industry; if he had not been a cog in the machinery of organized base ball, with wide travel and much experience of men, he would not be able to perfect the amazing organization of Sunday evangelistic campaigns; if he had not been a member and elder of a Presbyterian church he could not have resisted the religious vagaries which lead so many evangelists and immature Christian workers astray; if he had not been trained in three years of Y.M.C.A. service he would not today be the flaming and insistent protagonist of personal work that he now is; if he had not been converted definitely and consciously and quickly in a rescue mission he could not now preach his gospel of immediate conversion.

All of which is but another way of saying that Sunday was trained in God's school. God prepared the man for the work he was preparing for him. Only by such uncommon training could this unique messenger of the gospel be produced. A college course doubtless would have submerged Sunday into the level of the commonplace. A theological seminary would have denatured him. Evidently Sunday has learned the lesson of the value of individuality; he prizes it, preaches about it, and practices it. He probably does not know what "sui generis" means, but he is it. Over and over again he urges that instead of railing at what we have not enjoyed, we should magnify what we already possess. The shepherd's rod of Moses, rightly wielded, may be mightier than a king's scepter.

As we approach the development of the unique work of Billy Sunday, which is without a parallel in the history of evangelism, we must reckon with those forces which developed his personality and trace the steps which led him into his present imperial activity. For he has gone forward a step at a time.

He followed the wise rule of the rescue mission, that the saved should say so. At the very beginning he began to bear testimony to his new faith. Wherever opportunity offered he spoke a good word for Jesus Christ. In many towns and cities his testimony was heard in those early days; and there was not a follower of the base-ball game who did not know that Billy Sunday was a Christian.

The convert who does not join a church is likely soon to be in a bad way; so Sunday early united with the Jefferson Park Presbyterian Church, Chicago. He went into religious activity with all the ardor that he displayed on the base-ball field. He attended the Christian Endeavor society, prayer-meeting and the mid-week church service. This is significant; for it is usually the church members who are faithful at the mid-week prayer-meetings who are the vital force in a congregation.

Other rewards than spiritual awaited Sunday at the prayer-meeting; for there he met Helen A. Thompson, the young woman who subsequently became his wife. Between the meeting and the marriage altar there were various obstacles to be overcome. Another suitor was in the way, and besides, Miss Thompson's father did not take kindly to the idea of a professional base-ball player as a possible son-in-law, for he had old-fashioned Scotch notions of things. "Love conquers all," and in September, 1888, the young couple were married, taking their wedding trip by going on circuit with the base-ball team.

Mrs. Sunday's influence upon her husband has been extraordinary. It is a factor to be largely considered in any estimate of the man. He is a devoted husband, of the American type, and with his ardent loyalty to his wife has complete confidence in her judgment. She is his man of affairs. Her Scotch heritage has endowed her with the prudent qualities of that race, and she is the business manager of Mr. Sunday's campaigns. She it is who holds her generous, careless husband down to a realization of the practicalities of life.

'He makes no important decisions without consulting her, and she travels with him nearly all of the time, attending his meetings and watching over his work and his personal well-being like a mother. In addition Mrs. Sunday does yeoman service in the evangelistic campaigns.

The helplessness of the evangelist without his wife is almost ludicrous: he dislikes to settle any question, whether it be an acceptance of an invitation from a city or the employment of an additional worker, without Mrs. Sunday's counsel. Frequently he turns vexed problems over to her, and abides implicitly by her decision, without looking into the matter himself at all.

Four children — Helen, George, William and Paul — have been born to the Sundays, two of whom are themselves married. The modest Sunday home is in Winona Lake, Indiana. When Mrs. Sunday is absent with her husband, the two younger children are left in the care of a trusted helper. The evangelist himself is home for only a short period each summer.

Mrs. Sunday was the deciding factor in determining her husband to abandon base ball for distinctively religious work. A woman of real Scotch piety, in the time of decision she chose the better part. Her husband had been addressing Y.M.C.A. meetings, Sunday-schools and Christian Endeavor societies. He was undeniably a poor speaker. No prophet could have foreseen the present master of platform art in the stammering, stumbling young man whose only excuse for addressing public meetings was the eagerness of men to hear the celebrated base-ball player's story. His speech was merely his testimony, such as is required of all mission converts.

If Sunday could not talk well on his feet he could handle individual men. His aptness in dealing with men led the Chicago Young Men's Christian Association to offer him an assistant secretaryship in the department of religious work. It is significant that the base-ball player went into the Y.M.C.A. not as a physical director but in the distinctively spiritual sphere. He refused an invitation to become physical director; for his religious zeal from the first outshone his physical prowess.

Those three years of work in the Chicago Association bulk large in the development of the evangelist. They were not all spent in dealing with the unconverted, by any means. Sunday's

tasks included the securing of speakers for noon-day prayer-meetings, the conducting of office routine, the raising of money, the distribution of literature, the visiting of saloons and other places to which invitations should be carried, and the following up of persons who had displayed an interest in the meetings. Much of it was sanctified drudgery: but it was all drill for destiny. The young man saw at close range and with particular detail what sin could do to men; and he also learned the power of the Gospel to make sinners over.

The evangelist often alludes to those days of personal work in Chicago. Such stories as the following have been heard by thousands.

A Father Disowned

“While I was in the Y.M.C.A. in Chicago I was standing on the corner one night and a man came along with his toes sticking out and a ragged suit on and a slouch hat and asked me for a dime to get something to eat. I told him I wouldn’t give him a dime because he would go and get a drink, he said, ‘You wouldn’t let me starve, would you?’ I told him no, but that I wouldn’t give him the money. I asked him to come to the Y.M.C.A. with me and stay until after the meeting and I would take him out and get him a good supper and a bed. He wanted me to do it right away before going to the Y.M.C.A., but I told him that I was working for someone until ten o’clock. So he came up to the meeting and stayed through the meeting and was very much interested. I saw that he used excellent language and questioned him and found that he was a man who had been Adjutant General of one of the Central States and had at one time been the editor of two of the biggest newspapers.

“I went with him after the meeting and got him a supper and a bed and went to some friends and we got his clothes. I asked him if he had any relatives and he said he had one son who was a bank cashier but that he had disowned him and his picture was taken from the family album and his name was never spoken in the house, all because he was now down and out, on account of booze.

“I wrote to the boy and said, ‘I’ve found your father. Send me some money to help him.’ He wrote back and said for me never to mention his father’s name to him again, that it wasn’t ever spoken around the house and that his father was forgotten.

“I replied: ‘You miserable, low-down wretch. You can’t disown your father and refuse to help him because he is down and out. Send me some money or I will publish the story in all of the papers.’ He sent me five dollars and that’s all I ever got from him. I took care of the old man all winter and in the spring I went to a relief society in Chicago and got him a ticket to his home and put him on the train and that was the last I ever saw of him.”

Redeeming a Son

“I stood on the street one Sunday night giving out tickets inviting men to the men’s meeting in Farwell Hall. Along came a young fellow, I should judge he was thirty, who looked prematurely old, and he said, ‘Pard, will you give me a dime?’”

“I said, ‘I want to get somethin’ to eat.’”

“No, sir.”

“I said, ‘You look to me as though you were a booze-fighter.’”

“I am.”

“I’ll not give you money, but I’ll get your supper.”

“He said, ‘Come on. I haven’t eaten for two days.’”

“My time is not my own until ten o’clock. You go upstairs until then and I’ll buy you a good supper and get you a good, warm, clean bed in which to sleep, but I’ll not give you the money.”

“He said, ‘Thank you, I’ll go.’ He stayed for the meeting. I saw he was moved, and after the meeting I stood by his side. He wept and I talked to him about Jesus Christ, and he told me this story:

“There were three boys in the family. They lived in Boston. The father died, the will was probated, he was given his portion, took it, started out drinking and gambling. At last he reached Denver, his money was gone, and he got a position as fireman in the Denver and Rio Grande switch-yards. His mother kept writing to him, but he told me that he never read the letters. He said that when he saw the postmark and the writing he threw the letter into the firebox, but one day, he couldn’t tell why, he opened the letter and it read:

“Dear : I haven’t heard from you directly, but I am sure that you must need a mother’s care in the far-off West, and unless you answer this in a reasonable time I’m going to Denver to see you.’ And she went on pleading, as only a mother could, and closed it: ‘Your loving mother.’”

“He said, ‘I threw the letter in the fire and paid no more heed to it. One day about two weeks later I saw a woman coming down the track and I said to the engineer: “That looks like my mother.” She drew near, and I said: “Yes, that’s mother.” What do you think I did?’”

“I said, ‘Why you climbed out of your engine, kissed her and asked God to forgive you.’”

“He said, ‘I did nothing of the kind. I was so lowdown, I wouldn’t even speak to my mother. She followed me up and down the switchyard and even followed me to my boarding house. I went upstairs, changed my clothes, came down, and she said, “Frank, stay and talk with me.” I pushed by her and went out and spent the night in sin. I came back in the morning, changed my clothes and went to work. For four days she followed me up and down the switchyards and then she said, “Frank, you have broken my heart, and I am going away tomorrow.”’”

“I happened to be near the depot with the engine when she got on the train and she raised the window and said, “Frank, kiss me good-bye.” I stood talking with some of my drinking and gambling friends and one man said, “Frank Adsitt, you are a fool to treat your mother like that. Kiss her good-bye.” I jerked from him and turned back. I heard the conductor call “All aboard.” I

heard the bell on the engine ring and the train started out, and I heard my mother cry, “Oh, Frank, if you won’t kiss me good-bye, for God’s sake turn and look at me!”

“Mr. Sunday, when the train on the Burlington Railroad pulled out of Denver, I stood with my back to my mother. That’s been nine years ago and I have never seen nor heard from her.’

“I led him to Jesus. I got him a position in the old Exposition building on the lake front. He gave me the money he didn’t need for board and washing. I kept his money for months. He came to me one day and asked for it.

“He used to come to the noon meetings every day.

Finally I missed him, and I didn’t see him again until in June, 1893, during the World’s Fair he walked into the Y.M.C.A. I said, ‘Why, Frank, how do you do?’

“He said, ‘How do you know me?’

“I said, ‘I have never forgotten you; how is your mother?’

“He smiled, then his face quickly changed to sadness, and he said, ‘She is across the street in the Brevoort House. I am taking her to California to fill her last days the sunshine.’

“Three months later, out in Pasadena, she called him to her bedside, drew him down, kissed him, and said, ‘Goodbye; I can die happy because I know my boy is a Christian.’”

The Gambler

“I have reached down into the slime, and have been privileged to help tens of thousands out of the mire of sin — and I believe that most of them will be saved, too. I’ve helped men in all walks of life. When I was in Chicago I helped a man and got him a position, and so was able to restore him to his wife and children. One night a fellow came to me and told me that the man was playing faro bank down on Clark Street. I said: ‘Why that can hardly be — I took dinner with him only a few hours ago.’

“But my informant had told me the truth, so I put on my coat and went down LaSalle Street and past the New York Life Building and along up the stairway to the gambling room. I went past the big doorkeeper, and I found a lot of men in there, playing keno and faro bank and roulette and stud and draw poker. I saw my man there, just playing a hand. In a moment he walked over to the bar and ordered a Rhine wine and seltzer.

I walked over and touched him on the shoulder, and he looked and turned pale. I said, ‘Come out of this. Come with me.’ He said, ‘Here’s my money,’ and pulled \$144 from his pocket and handed it to me. ‘I don’t want your money.’ He refused at first, and it was one o’clock in the morning before I got him away from there. I took him home and talked to him, then I sent down into Ohio for an old uncle of his, for he had forged notes amounting to \$2,000 or so, and we had to get him out of trouble. We got him all fixed up and we got him a job selling relief maps, and he made \$5,000 a year.

“I didn’t hear from him for a long time; then one day Jailor Whitman called me up and told me that Tom Barrett, an old ball player I knew well, wanted me to come up and see a man who had been sentenced to the penitentiary. I went down to the jail and the prisoner was my friend. I asked him what was the matter, and he said that he and some other fellows had framed up a plan to stick up a jewelry store. He was caught and the others got away. He wouldn’t snitch, and so he was going down to Joliet on an indeterminate sentence of from one to fourteen years. he said:

‘You are the only man that will, help me. Will you do it?’

“I said: ‘I won’t help you, I won’t spend so much as a postage stamp on you if you are going to play me dirt again!’ He promised to do better as soon as he got out, and I wrote a letter to my friend, Andy Russell, chairman of the board of pardons. He took up the case and we got my friend’s sentence cut down to a maximum of five years.

“Time passed again, and one day he came in dressed up to kill. He had on an \$80 overcoat, a \$50 suit, a \$4 necktie, a pair of patent leather shoes that cost \$15, shirt buttons as big as hickory nuts and diamond cuff buttons.

He walked up to my desk in the Y.M.C.A. and pulled out a roll of bills. There were a lot of them — yellow fellows. I noticed that there was one for \$500. There was over \$4,500 in the roll. He said: ‘I won it last night at faro bank.’ He asked me to go out to dinner with him and I went. We had everything on the bill of fare, from soup to nuts, and the check was \$7.60 apiece for two suppers. I’ve never had such a dinner since.

“We talked things over. He said he was making money hand over fist — that he could make more in a week than I could in a year. I was working at the Y.M.C.A. for \$83 a month, and then not getting it, and base-ball managers were making me tempting offers of good money to go back into the game at \$500 to \$1,000 a month to finish the season. But I wouldn’t do it. Nobody called me a grafter then. ‘Well,’ I said to my friend, ‘old man, you may have more at the end of the year than I’ve got — maybe I won’t have carfare — but I’ll be ahead of you.’

“Where is he now? Down at Joliet, where there is a big walled institution and where the stripes on your clothes run crossways.

A Living Testimony

“I had a friend who was a brilliant young fellow. He covered the Chino-Japanese war for a New York paper. He was on his way home when he was shipwrecked, and the captain and he were on an island living on roots for a week and then they signaled a steamer and got started home. He got word from the New York Tribune and they told him to go to Frisco, so he went, and they told him to come across the arid country and write up the prospects of irrigation. And as he walked across those plains, he thought of how they would blossom if they were only irrigated. Then he thought of how his life was like that desert, with nothing in it but waste.

“He got to Chicago and got a job on the Times and lost it on account of drunkenness, and couldn’t get another on account of having no recommendation. So he walked out one winter

night and took his reporter's book, addressed it to his father, and wrote something like this: 'I've made a miserable failure of this life. I've disgraced you and sent mother to a premature grave. If you care to look for me you'll find my body in the Chicago River.' He tossed aside the book and it fell on the snow.

"He leaped to the rail of the bridge, but a policeman who had been watching him sprang and caught him. He begged him to let him leap, but the policeman wouldn't do it and got his story from him. Then the policeman said, 'Well, I don't know whether you're stringing me or not, but if half of what you say is true you can make a big thing out of life. I'm not much on religion, but I'll show you a place where they will keep you,' and he took him to the Pacific Garden Mission at 100 East Van Buren Street, which for 13,000 nights has had its doors open every night.

"He went in and sat down by a bum. He read some of them mottos, like 'When did you write to mother last?' and they began to work on him and he asked the bum what graft they got out of this. The bum flared right up and said there was no graft, that Mrs. Clark had just mortgaged her home for \$3,000 to pay back rent. Then he told him he could sleep right there and go down in the morning and get something to eat free, and if he could not land a bed by next night he could come back to one of the benches. Then my friend got up and told him the story of Jesus Christ, and the young man went down and accepted Christ. he was so full of gold bromide cures that he tingled when he talked and he jingled when he walked.

"He started out to give his testimony and he was a marvelous power. I met him some time later in an elevator in Chicago, and he was dressed to kill with a silk lid and a big diamond and the latest cut Prince Albert, and he said, 'Bill, that was a great day for me. I started out with not enough clothes to make a tail for a kite or a pad for a crutch and now look at me.' He was secretary in the firm of Morgan & Wright, and was drawing \$175 a month. He is an expert stenographer. A newspaper in New York had written him to take an associate editorship, but I told him not to do it, to stay where he was and tell his story."

The next class in the University of Experience which Sunday entered was that of professional evangelistic work, in association with Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, D.D., the well-known Presbyterian evangelist. This invitation came after three years of service in the Chicago Y.M.C.A. Not yet to platform speaking as his chief task was Sunday called. Far from it. He was a sort of general roustabout for the evangelist. His duties were multifarious. He was advance agent, going ahead to arrange meetings, to organize choirs, to help the local committee of arrangements with its advertising or other preparations, and, in general, tying up all loose ends. When tents were used he would help erect them with his own hands; the fists that so sturdily beat pulpits today, have often driven home tent pegs. Sunday sold the evangelist's song books and sermons at the meetings; helped take up the collection, and, when need arose, spoke from the platform. The persons who wonder at the amazing efficiency for organization displayed by Sunday overlook this unique apprenticeship to a distinguished evangelist. He is a "practical man" in every aspect of evangelistic campaigns, from organizing a local committee and building the auditorium, to handling and training the converts who come forward.

The providence of all this is clear in retrospect: but as for Sunday himself, he was being led by a way that he knew not.