

REV. "BILLY" SUNDAY.

At different times we have noticed articles and editorials in our holiness papers about the work of "Billy" Sunday, some approving and some disapproving. Mr. Sunday does not give the snap of his fingers for the opinion of the holiness people, in fact, he seems at times to take delight in flinging a slur at them and their doctrine. In spite of these things, and his attitude towards us, we thank God for the work the man has been permitted to do, and is still doing. He is a mighty force for righteousness in this country, and is being used to awaken the church to a sense of appreciation of vital religion.

We are glad to print the accompanying editorial taken from "The Continent," the paper of Mr. Sunday's own denomination, as expressing in a kindly way the deserved criticism of the man and his methods, while giving credit for the work he has done. We trust it may help some of our readers to get a balanced and fair judgment of the man.

"Rev. William A. Sunday is today thoroughly established in the appreciation and confidence of the evangelical churches of America, as a pre-eminently efficient evangelist. The general verdict of Protestant opinion is: 'No man can do these signs except God be with him.' In one especially commanding respect his preaching constrains sympathy from all who follow Jesus as a Divine Saviour.

Mr. Sunday with a passionate and supreme conviction offers to his hearers continually a Christ who this day here in America, the same as a Palestine 2,000 years ago, 'hath authority on earth to forgive sins'—and declares that 'in none other is there salvation.' Likewise, his terrific revulsion at the sinfulness of sin and his tremendous urgency on the sinner to come and be made clean in Christ, dominate both regenerate and unregenerate consciences. Moreover, the church owes Mr. Sunday gratitude for his militant unconventionality—his smashing war on the piggishness of custom. Just as in the time of Christ, the church today is bound in tradition—manacled by shivering fear of doing anything peculiar. Mr. Sunday bursts these chains of timorous propriety. So he sets thousands of men free—Christians and sinners—to stand out for what they have known for years they ought to stand for.

But while the church thus confers on Mr. Sunday its indorsement, a critical world challenges it to say whether by this it approves certain much debated idiosyncrasies of his.

To this challenge the church can only make candid answer: It does believe Mr. Sunday to be a man with a divine commission, but that does not prevent it from deploring in him many shortcomings. This, however, yields nothing to trifling cavils from the unfriendly and supercilious. It is puerile to carp at Mr. Sunday's slang, his platform antics and such like eccentricities. At the worst, these things are but breaches of taste. The only thing in which the church has need to allow discount from its favor for Mr. Sunday are such things as subtract from his imitation and interpretation of the Master he preaches.

Thus the church is bound to repudiate Mr. Sunday's irreverence. It is not his familiarity with his Lord which evokes criticism. A holy intimacy with Christ is every Christian's privilege. Mr. Sunday offends not by intimacy, but by a happy-go-lucky air of equality with his Master—especially in what he represents to be public prayer.

Apparently, Mr. Sunday never yet has heard

the mystic whisper, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Instead of stealing hushed and awestruck to the garment hem of God, the evangelist bolts into the divine presence like a gossip neighbor "dropping around" for a chat. This is not reverence, and reverence is vital to religion. Mr. Sunday's chumminess with his Creator is no wholesome example.

It is pointless to complain of the frequency and freedom with which Mr. Sunday talks of hell. The gospel note which he emphasizes with this unmistakable word is a note that ought to have larger place in modern preaching. The present day preacher follows Paul in reasoning gently of "righteousness and self-control" but evades "judgment to come." Mr. Sunday puts it all in.

But his fault is that in preaching hell he preaches it with gusto instead of anguish and yearning. Surely, it was not thus but in heart-break that Jesus uttered his dreadful "woes." Would Jesus gloat over Dives in torment? But to Mr. Sunday the tongue that pleads across the abyss for a drop of cooling water is a joke. Generations ago the church put behind it the grotesque idea of Jonathan Edwards that the redeemed in heaven would rejoice at the sight of sinners punished in hell. It certainly cannot today approve in Mr. Sunday the recrudescence of that point of view.

The great sums of money which the people bestow on Mr. Sunday in "free-will offerings" are nothing to be counted against him. It is only fair to recognize that he adopted this method for his own compensation when the returns from it were very problematical. No sordid motives can be traced in Mr. Sunday's original consecration to evangelistic work. And now the only question worth the anxiety to the church is the question whether the "deceitfulness of riches," which Jesus Christ dreaded so much, may have corroded in some degree the mirror in which an evangelist's soul ought to reflect the image of the Lord. The zeal which Mr. Sunday still maintains his financial plans against all modification now that he has discovered in them an El Dorado, and the subtle ways in which from the platform he encourages extravagant gifts, suggest painfully that he is not today as indifferent to the glitter of gold as when he started on his work.

But far from the most serious defect about Mr. Sunday is the absence of sign that he has been in that school to which Jesus invited his disciples when he said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." He knows so little of what Mary learned at the feet of Jesus that he has even ridiculed one of his sermons the religion of the woman whom Jesus praised for having "chosen the good part"—a dissent from the inspired word of God which the most extreme of higher critics can hardly in any instance have equalled. And there is at least one text of Paul from which it would be impossible for the present Mr. Sunday to preach: "I myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." In a word, Mr. Sunday is unprepared to represent to men the tenderness, the compassion and the humility of Jesus—peculiarly not the humility. And that is a serious blank to leave in evangelistic gospel or in an evangelistic personality.

It results not only in un-Christlike harshness towards sinners, but (even sadder) in lofty scorn toward fellow Christians. When Mr. Sunday declares the failure of his brother ministers, he speaks as one superior to the faults he denounces—even as the Pharisee who prided himself upon being "not as the rest of men."

GIDEON'S BAND.

"Every man in his place," stood the noble three hundred,
With trumpets, and pitchers and lights in their hand;
While Midian's host lay along in the valley,
Not knowing their danger from Gideon's band.

"Every man in his place," when the trumpets sounded,
When pitchers were broken and lights flashed so bright;
'Twas thus, with a shout, every foe was confounded,
And Gideon's band was triumphant that night.

"Every man in his place!" there are foes to be conquered;
Oh, where are the followers of Gideon's band—
The true and the tried ones, the valiant three hundred
Who answer the call for righteousness stand.

"Every man in his place! for the foe is advancing;
The forces of evil are stealthy and strong;
Stand firm for the truth, O ye fearless three hundred,
And flash out your lights o'er the ramparts of wrong.

"Every man in his place," in the strength of Jehovah!
He calls for the watchful, the humble, the brave—
Are you in the ranks of his chosen three hundred?
Then sound out his battle cry—"Mighty to save!"

"Every man in his place," O ye called and ye chosen!
What honor to fight in the ranks of our King!
To go at his bidding from vict'ry to vict'ry,
And o'er sin's cohorts triumphantly sing!

"Every man in his place," standing shoulder to shoulder.
Nor fearing nor shrinking though millions oppose;
Our captain is Jesus, and soon to his glory
He'll bring us triumphant o'er all of our foes.
—By Katie V. Hall in Faith and Works.

"Jesus was innocent and yet forceful. This is a rare but divinely necessary combination. How rare is indicated by the popular fallacy that only those who have had personal experience of sin and evil can denounce and intelligently antagonize it. As though God would be a greater and better God if he had once been a devil."—R. E. Speer.

"Prayer will not make things easier for the lazy man."

Mr. Sunday preaches enough gospel to bring men into the kingdom. He does bring men into the kingdom. Therefore the church upholds him. But seeing he is at once and the same time a man of great power, great possibility and great peril, there ought to be "prayer made earnestly of the church unto God for him" that he may be lifted to higher and safer levels."—Heart and Life.