

BILLY SUNDAY'S BIBLE

By WILLIAM H. SEED

BILLY Sunday has written a book! If you like Billy Sunday you will like this book; if he shocks you, the book will do likewise. Here is a sample:

"Samson found himself in his element down at Timmath.

"When he put on his new pinch-back toga, and strolled down the rialto, stopping at every thirst garage on the way, he was the real goods—in the eyes of the crowd.

"They would wait outside the saloon while he went inside to put another crimp in the visible supply of bonded wobble-juice—and every time he came out he was wearing his chest a few inches farther out in the front.

"Samson was only human.

"He thought he was hitting on all twelve cylinders all the time.

"But his carburetor needed attention.

"And he was eating up gas instead of mileage.

"He soon began taking all the jazz of Flash Alley home with him and trying it on his piano—and thinking how nice it sounded.

"It didn't take him long to begin kidding himself, and the moment a man starts in to throw the solitary bull it's mighty-nighty for him.

"When he begins to put a war price on himself he's a mark for the first stick-up guy that wanders along the avenue.

"God started Samson in life with his blessing. But the applause of the wrong kind of people came between him and God.

"By the time Samson had performed in public a few times and had been given top column, first page position in the Philistine Evening Breeze, he had to have his new spring lids made to order.

"It was impossible to find one in stock big enough for him.

"There are always one or two expert barbers in the next block.

"Samson didn't intend to have his hair cut when he started out.

"He didn't expect to become a prisoner. Nobody ever does.

"The devil greases the skids for you, but you have to climb to get to heaven.

"That's the difference.

"Samson's first courtship at Timmath was all to the merry.

"The girl he had fallen for was one of those dizzy blondes with the gasoline gaze and the Come Hither smile, that are imported especially for the benefit of the wise guy who knows the world.

"And Samson thought he knew everything in the world.

"He thought he had the telephone number of every lily in the garden of love.

"A pretty woman can do more tricks with one of these wiselhelms than a monkey can do with a coconut.

"You've met the kind.

"A good woman is the nearest approach to heaven in human form.

"A bad woman can send a man to

the devil before he realizes he is on the way.

"And she never gives him a return ticket, either.

"In the meantime Samson didn't let his wooing interfere with his press-agenting of himself.

"He was the world's original strong-arm guy, and he wanted folks to know it.

"One day when he was beating it over to that particular town where his particular Fluffy Ruffles received her mail, with a box of chocolates under his arm, and a bunch of orchids in his mitt, he met a lion.

"It so happened that the lion hadn't been reading the newspaper lately—and so on.

I have given this rather lengthy quotation because there will doubtless be many people who will read this review who will never see the book, and as all of its 329 pages run along in the same style, nothing I can say will give a better idea of it than a good sample.

Billy Sunday has parodied ten Old Testament stories in this way, opening with Adam and Eve. The latter, he says, "was the first woman to wipe her talcum powder off on a man's coat."

At the outset his worst detractors will have to admit he has produced a very readable book. He has taught me several things I didn't know about American slang, and he has made me laugh. If this had come from the press as a professedly funny book I would have put it in the first class for low comedy. Viewed in that light I have quite a friendly feeling for it.

I must, however, remember that this book is supposed to have a serious purpose. It is meant, I suppose, to spread religion, to bring its readers to a consciousness of sin. With the best will in the world I cannot see that it is adapted to any such purpose. It proves that its author would have been a roaring success as a music hall comedian, but it fails to prove his fitness to interpret the Bible.

Surely it does not need to be said one gets not the faintest light on the Biblical stories from these absurd pieces of horse humor. Samson cannot be understood by anyone who will not take the trouble to acquaint himself with the salient facts of Old Testament exegesis, and there is not the slightest suggestion that Billy Sunday has done this. Perhaps he thinks he is presenting a modernized version of Samson—picturing him as he would if he lived in present-day America. Even so he is very wide of the mark. The fact is that had Samson been born at the present day he could not have been anything like the type of man he may be supposed to have been in ancient Syria. Deep down the main lines of his character would be the same, but superficially he would have been totally different, and Billy Sunday presents nothing but a superficial picture. This is, of course, granting him his

belief that the characters he thus

grotesquely misrepresents, including Adam and Eve, are real historical characters, and not mythological ones.

It is very difficult indeed to deal with the book seriously. Taken as a joke it has its merits. It is gross humor to put these words in the mouth of God, addressed to Adam:

"Here is a real home, and there is no installment-plan mortgage on it. It has modern improvements, a southern exposure, open plumbing, hot and cold running water, a magnificent view from the front porch."

That is the kind of satire we would expect from the cheapest kind of street-corner propagandist of secularism. But it comes from one whom we are asked to take seriously as a propagandist, not of secularism, but of religion!

We read about Abraham's telephone, his automobile, his roltop desk, and his writing a check to cash for six figures, for "he was the principal depositor at the bank." We are told he puts an advertisement in the morning paper advertising his business for a quick sale. "The announcement made some excitement in the burg, for Abraham had been regarded as one of the fixtures of the place, and one of the pillars of the community." He wipes his face with his handkerchief and sits down in his chair to "baked beans and apple pie."

I give it up. I cannot imagine how this kind of thing is intended to make anyone religious. It certainly does not help anyone to understand the Bible. It cannot make anyone love or reverence Bible characters. What effect is it supposed to have? Frankly I do not know, and the more I think of it the more I am at a loss.

But if this vulgarization of Billy Sunday's misunderstanding of the Old Testament is believed to have some religious value, perhaps he will interpret the New Testament in the same way. What he says in his Foreword would seem to foreshadow such a calamity. Let him speak for himself:

"I am trying to bring the Gospel, and the Bible, and Christ into the day's work and the day's pleasures of the men and women whom I urge to accept them.

"I want to make them real, and vital and definite, and personal."

Again he says:

"If we are willing to accept the Only Son of God as our personal atonement—the most vital and intimate service that can be rendered to us—there is no good reason to hold Him at arm's length."

It would seem, therefore, that Billy Sunday is perfectly capable of guying the Crucifixion!

Billy Sunday has no patience with his critics.

"The real objection of a lot of them," he says, "is that they don't like to be told that they are headed straight for perdition—in a language they can understand."

That, however, is not my objection,

The Paris

New Suits
New Dresses
New Coats
New Millinery

In Vast Assortments at
Low Prices that will
amaze you.

New Arrivals Daily.
Something Different
Every Time You
Come In.

SEE OUR WINDOWS



Most of The People

to whom we sell

COLUMBIA GRAFONOLAS

are people who
have critically
examined other
makes of instru-
ments elsewhere

Daynes-Beebe Music Co.
1813 S. MAIN ST. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
ESTABLISHED 1900
OLDEN THAN THE STATE OF UTAH