The Real Billy Sunday. By E. P. BROWN, D.D. 12mo, pp. 285. New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company. Price, cloth, with portraits and many illustrations, $1.15.

BILLY SUNDAY is the most powerful and popular Presbyterian preacher in America. What is his preaching like? It is as lively and intense as this: "We played the old Detroit team. We were neck and neck for the championship, and four games were going to settle it. 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. I think he could put more turns and twists into a ball than any pitcher I ever saw. There are some fine pitchers to-day—Bender, Wood, Matthewson, Johnson, Marquard, and others—but I don't believe any of them stands in the class with Clarkson. They had two men out, and they had a man on second and another on third, with Bennett, their old catcher, at the bat. Charley had three balls and two strikes on him. He couldn't hit a high ball, but he could kill them when they went about his knee. I called to Clarkson, and said, 'One more, John, and we've got 'em!' You know every pitcher digs a hole in the ground where he puts his foot when he is pitching. John stuck his foot into the hole, and he went clear back to the ground. O how he could make them dance! He could throw overhanded and the ball would go down and up. He is the only man I ever saw do it. He could send a ball so swift that the batter would feel the thermometer drop as it whizzed by. John went clear down, and just as he let the ball go his right foot slipped, and the ball went low instead of high. I saw Charley swing hard, and heard the bat crack as he met the ball square on the nose. As I saw the ball rise in the air I knew it was going clear over my head, into the crowd that overflowed into the field. I could judge within ten feet of where a ball would light, so I turned my back to the ball and ran, and as I ran I yelled, 'Get out of the way!' And that crowd opened like the Red Sea for the rod of Moses. I ran on and as I flew over the dirt I made a prayer. It wasn't theological either, I tell you that. As near as I can remember, it was something like this: 'O Lord, if you ever helped mortal man, help me to get that ball!' I ran and jumped over the bench when I thought I was under the ball, and stopped. I looked back and saw it going over my head, and I jumped and shoved my left hand up, 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. But I held to the ball and jumped up with the ball in my hand. My! how they yelled!" That was Billy Sunday on the baseball field, as one of the crack players on the famous old Chicago White Stockings team of the National League. Young Billy, the ballplayer, sat on the curbstone one Sunday afternoon, while a little band of Mission workers were praying and singing at the corner of State and Van Buren Streets, Chicago. Presently they sang some of his mother's hymns, and that went to his heart. One of the workers spoke to him, sitting on the curb, and invited him to a meeting at the mission, two blocks away. His mother's hymns, singing once more in his soul, carried him to the hall, where he gave himself to his mother's Saviour. He joined a live Presbyterian church and went to work like a live Christian who meant business. The Y. M. C. A. soon set him to talking in public. That was the beginning of this Baseball Evangelist. Billy came off the athletic field and doesn't know any better than to bring all the intense energy and enthusiasm of a ball field into his religious work. Something very like a ball game is going on upon the platform when he is preaching: the activity, the lunge, and the lingo of the field. He is running or sliding for base, he is pitching the ball swift and skillfully,

or leaping off the ground to catch it, and he is using some amazing language. O horrors! He uses slang, the rough speech of the man on the street, in talking about sin and salvation. And this offends some dainty and sensitive good people. He startles and jars almost everybody at first; he makes folks wince and shiver; but this is not all he does: before he gets through he masters them. A vast audience in Minneapolis sat waiting for him to arrive. Some of them expected to see something rough, or careless, or sporty, or pugnacious in his looks when he came on the platform. But no! There he was, smooth, clean, clear-complexioned, shapely, and lithe as a fleet Arabian, sweet and wholesome, manly and good to look upon, sitting beside that fine, strong, wise woman, his wife. When the time came, Billy sprang into the game with eager zest, impetuous vigor, and terrific earnestness, which would have been all right, of course, on the ball field, where big money was staked on the result—but—but here, where only souls were at stake, it seemed to some not quite the thing for a man to astonish and agitate his audience with such unchurchly language as he used. A bishop and ex-university president with brains in his head who listened to Billy that day, being asked what he thought of it, said, "At first he disgusted me with his slang, but the last half *shook the life out of me.*" The bishop's experience represented that of the audience. The close of that Minneapolis address was so overwhelming, from every point of view, that it is difficult to imagine any human being standing up against it. In Pittsburgh the Episcopal churches held aloof in disapproval of Billy Sunday's Evangelistic Campaign. But after it was over a writer in The Churchman (Protestant Episcopal, New York) made this confession: "Billy Sunday has come to Pittsburgh and gone. Whatever he accomplished, he did it without the help or even the assent of the Episcopal Church. More: he did it in the face of the church's public criticism. Undoubtedly to many outside the church her attitude toward the Sunday revival appears inexplicable, or worse, which is a grave statement. . . . This buffoon of an evangelist made religion a subject of ordinary conversation. People talked about their souls as freely as about their breakfasts. He went into the homes of the rich, dropped his wildness of speech, and made society women cry with shame and contrition. One's eternal welfare became the topic of the dinner-table, not only in the slums, but in the houses of fashion. It sounds incredible, and it is not a fact to be grasped by the mere reading about it, but the citizens of Pittsburgh forgot to be ashamed to mention prayer and the forgiveness of sins, and the name of Christ began to be used with simpleness and readiness and reverence by men who two months ago employed it only as a by-word. City politicians came forward at the meetings and asked for prayer. The daily newspapers gave more space to salvation than they did to scandal, not for one day, but day after day and week after week. As a mere spectacle of a whole modern city enthralled by the gospel it was astonishing, unbelievable, unprecedented, prodigious." A newspaper man, sent from New York to investigate the results of Sunday's meetings in Pittsburgh, wrote, "Try every way I could and in many

directions, I could not find any adverse opinions. 'I am strongly for him,' said the editor of a prominent daily, and that seems to be the general feeling." The big stores sent their employees in a body to the meetings. One establishment sent eleven hundred. Working girls and factory operatives attended the noon meetings in crowds. The police on duty in the tabernacle succumbed to the spiritual power of the services, and one day ten of them at once walked to the front and before the crowd of fifteen thousand declared themselves on the Lord's side. The saloon keepers were dismayed at the effect on their business. Two of them said, "If this thing lasts two weeks longer we'll have to go under." The checkroom boy in the hotel said, "All the fellers go to the meetings," and went on to tell of boozers and gamblers who had been converted. For eight weeks this tide of moral power flooded the city and held its attention. Every daily newspaper published Billy's sermons in full every day. Such are the facts reported by observers on the ground. One of them says: "Vital religion; man's personal responsibility to God; a Bible that reveals the mind of God; salvation through the cross of Christ alone; a life clean in all its bearings—these are the core of Sunday's messages." The Lutheran churches in Pittsburgh declined to participate in the campaign; but the Lutheran Observer (Philadelphia), hearing the wild false reports in circulation about the cost per convert of Billy Sunday's services, took the trouble to collect and publish the figures, the result showing that the cost for 167,036 converts in eighteen towns and cities was one dollar and fifty-nine cents per convert. A New York secular daily, commenting on the attempt to figure out the cost of saving each soul, remarked rebukingly that even if the highest figures named by the critics were correct, *only the children of this world would think the price too high.* When some were saying some time ago that Billy Sunday would do in the Middle West and in small towns, the New York Sun remarked: "So said the wise men. Thereupon Billy Sunday betakes himself to the towns and cities that rejoice to call themselves urban, and turns them upside down, repeating with their smug populations his successes with the supposedly less alert ruralists." When a university president was in agony of soul over the moral condition of his students, three of whom had committed suicide in one week, he sent for Billy Sunday, introduced him to three thousand of them packed into the gymnasium, and before this Baseball Evangelist left, hundreds of the students had pledged themselves to a Christian life. Billy Sunday is a phenomenon, an unparalleled "surprise party," all by himself, but his ministry, startling and eccentric as it is, is not unauthorized. A Roman Catholic priest in New York says: "Mr. Sunday is making religion ridiculous. Saint Paul said of preachers, 'How can they preach except they are sent?' Well, who sent this man Sunday?" Well, if fruits are any proof, it looks as if God sent him, and that is what hosts of the Catholics of Pittsburgh believe and thankfully acknowledge. "Who sent this man Sunday?" That great, wise, intellectual, able, dignified, solid, and powerful body known as the Presbyterian Church, toward which even the pretentious Papal organization may well stand somewhat in awe, has "sent this man Sunday," for he is a minister

in good and regular standing in that great church, clothed with all the dignity and authority of its solemn ordination. Blessed is the church which sees its God-given opportunity and uses the God-given man. The Church of England did not, and crowded out the Wesleyans. The Wesleyans did not, and failed to make enough room for William Booth and his Salvation Army methods. Both bodies lost a quickening spiritual force and an arm of tremendous power. Recognition of the exceptional man and giving him free chance to run and glorify God by saving men in his own way, no matter how unusual and innovational, is no disparagement of "the regular ministry." The church of Charles H. Parkhurst and Henry van Dyke is wise enough to send out William Ashley Sunday, who brings as much credit as they to the church of his choice. God brings great evangelists like Wesley out of Oxford University, and President Finney from Oberlin, but he also brings William Carey from the shoemaker's bench and makes mighty preachers out of colliers digging in English mines, from Wesley's day to ours. He give divine ordination to soldiers like Chinese Gordon and General O. O. Howard, to a sailor like Father Taylor, to a Bohemian like Gipsy Smith, to a physician like Grenfell, of Labrador, to drunkards like Francis Murphy and Jerry McAuley and Sam Hadley and John Callahan, and to a barkeeper like John Masefield, who quits mixing drinks and sings divinely of "The Everlasting Mercy." It is a grand thing for a great university when the captain of its football team is president of its Y. M. C. A. And it is a glorious thing when God finds a young fellow on the athletic field out of whom he can make an evangelist who will "stand upon his feet and play the game" to beat the Devil's team, a captain of salvation who can shake a city and rally the Christian forces to storm the gates of hell. And if he can do such things, give him right of way, even if his ball-field lingo doesn't wear evening dress nor part its hair in the middle; even if he jumps on a chair and waves his arms and shouts like a man in a political nominating convention, appealing to the crowd to save the country by nominating his nominee; or even if he throws off coat, collar, and vest as if about to plunge in and save somebody like a sailor who hears the cry, "Man overboard!" The saving of this world from sin is a grim task. Daintiness and dignity cannot do it. The religion of the Crucified is not here to invent or protect forms and conventionalities. The church is not out for a holiday to pick flowers in the fields, but to pluck men as brands from the burning. The church needs books of tactics more than it needs books of etiquette. Our enemies are not elegant and suave and polite. Look at Anthony Comstock's scarred face, wearing as a decoration of honor the gashes given him by the human fiends he fights—the dirtiest, meanest, most malignant and venomous devils that ever crawled up like vipers over the edge of the world out of the cesspools and sewers of the horrible pit of hell. Ask Anthony Comstock what kind of a job the church has on its hands. A high-browed editor looks out from his lofty conning-tower on Billy Sunday's gestures and writes superciliously of "Religion With a Punch." Is there not too much "religion" *without* any "punch," without stroke

or movement, too feeble or inactive to make a dent or any impression on the community? A man who has hunted up some facts answers the writer of the "Religion-With-a-Punch" editorial thus: "You criticize Billy Sunday's vulgarisms and the narrowness of his message; but, in spite of all that, he is reaching, influencing, and helping more men than all the 'liberal' churches in America. He is getting drunkards out of the gutter, roués out of the houses of debauchery, gamblers out of the gambling-hells, and bringing a host of careless men and women to lead earnest and consecrated lives." Excellent things to do, no doubt; but how much more decorous and seemly it would be if Billy did all these wonderful works as you and I do them! Only, come to think, you and I don't do them very much; which, perhaps, is that much against letting Billy do them. Strange to say, Billy goes on doing them without asking our permission. In the business world to-day the "efficiency test" rules, and business men are applying that test to the church. They say sharply, "Show us your results—their variety and volume and value." When they hear that thirteen hundred churches in our Spring Conferences report not one probationer on the books, they think that several hundred ministers and churches need to catch some of Billy Sunday's intense zeal and energy. It is "dead earnest" that tells. "It's 'dogged' as does it." The men of business have their own good reasons for standing by Billy as they do. It is the *efficiency test* that puts Billy Sunday at the top. He is beyond dispute a master of assemblies. Apart from his slang and his gestures, he can give theological students and many preachers lessons in public speaking. His utterance is clear, natural, manly, effective. When he reads or quotes Scripture, he gives the spirit and the meaning; the words quiver and tingle and burn on his lips. His expression and delivery are telling. Before we lay down this book which aims to give us The Real Billy Sunday, we express the conviction that in this alert and intensely active age the ministry and the church need a greater variety of men and methods, more fertility of invention, more elasticity and flexibility of adaptation, more freedom and daring in making experiments, more tolerance of individual peculiarities, ideas, and plans. To fight everywhere and with all sorts of weapons, and to enlist everybody who is willing to fight, is our necessity in the present emergency. Browning tells a thrilling story about that day when the Greeks at Marathon beat back the barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on, did the deed and saved the world. The great poet tells how each trained soldier did his manliest, kept his place, and fought all day in his proper rank and file, armed with helmet, shield, and spear. But one strange figure was seen dashing here and there and yonder, a man without spear or shield or helmet, but a goat-skin all his wear, a rude tiller of the soil, a rustic clown with his brown limbs broad and bare. Seeing the fight, he left his furrow unfinished, and, with no weapon except his plowshare, rushed to the field of battle. And wherever the need seemed greatest, there he appeared. Did the steady phalanx falter, or the right-wing waver, or the weak left wing give way, to the rescue came the peasant; there that clown was plowing Persia, clearing Greek earth of weeds as he routed

through the Sakian and rooted up the Medes. And down to the dust went Persia's pomp as he plowed for Greece, that clown! "Praise to the Holder of the Plowshare!" cries Browning justifiably. Billy Sunday uses his own peculiar weapons, fights in his own peculiar, dashing way, but he is doing mighty execution on the field in the Marathon of the world. Prim and dainty proprieties sometimes have a troubled time of it in this rough-and-tumble gusty world, as plumes and draperies have abreast of the Flatiron Building on a windy day. Even religious decorum is not safe in its own sacred citadel. One fine evening H. R. Haweis preached in New York in one of the fashionable churches, the temple of highly finished forms, a drawing-room in which the Almighty is supposed to give an "At Home" to elegantly dressed and wealthy folk. The church was filled to hear the noted English clergyman. The rector being absent, a nice, neat-looking curate had charge of the service. Now, Haweis, of London, was a man of brains and culture and fire, not a man-milliner nor a manicurist of morals. That night his brain was incandescent—the phosphorus blazing brightly. He announced for his text these words: "Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; whereunto I am appointed a preacher." A kind of thrill ran through the wonderful words as he read them. For the next hour that audience-room seemed a wind-swept place, with something like a gale from the hills of glory blowing. The gospel of the life eternal was given a field-day then and there. But Tennyson's Clara Vere de Vere, had she been there, would have been as unhappy and displeased as the dapper curate seemed, for the preacher's movements had not the composure nor his manner of speech the reserve that marks the caste of Vere de Vere; and one almost wonders if even the lions on her old stone gates could have maintained their stony calm under the pelting of such a storm. The preacher disregarded the customary poses and proprieties. He was awkwardly lame and one would suppose that for his own comfort's sake he would stand still, and that for the sake of hiding his deformity he would stay in the pulpit. On the contrary, he stepped out into the open; he leaned forward and backward over and against the reading desk from all four sides of it; he limped to and fro, across and around, pounding over the platform, thumpity-thump with that lame leg, mostly along the platform's edge as near as possible to the front seats. He made those people laugh and cry. The reverent ladies of the vested choir in their conspicuous chancel-seats strove commendably to maintain their gravity, but even their self-control gave way and they, too, were shaking presently with soft and holy laughter, and after that they laughed happily and unashamed, until later their sobered faces trembled into tears. The little curate looked worried, perhaps offended. The great preacher made it seem a glorious thing to be a living spirit dowered with immortality. His sermon was the revel of a winged and far-sighted soul, like the flight of an eagle aspiring to all the sky there is, the unrestrained and holy frolic of a royal mind. Nor was it a mere flight. He buttressed solid arguments with firm facts. He brought the richest treasures of philosophy, and

history, and poetry, and science, and piled them in splendid heaps upon his subject. He used logic and ridicule, made the rationalist look irrational, satirized the skeptic, hustled the denier in a way resembling Chesterton's, lashed and scarified the creatures who desecrate and degrade the form of man by groveling on all fours like beasts as if they had not been given the sublime start of being made in the image of God. And now and then, especially toward the close, strains of exultation sounded in the high arches of his discourse as noble and stately and rapturous as the Hallelujah Chorus. No one there had ever heard a mightier meditation on the Life that is Real and Eternal, but the platform which this awkward but inspired lame man paced was strewn with the wreck of conventional pulpit proprieties, and, in a church expecting a tabloid sermonette of fifteen minutes on Sunday evening, that terrible man went on regardless for an hour and five minutes. Do you wonder the poor little curate looked sick and disgusted?