

RUTH BRANDON

THE AGENT'S DAUGHTER

Or, Science Against Savage Force

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Terrible and Pathetic Incidents

Of Border Existence, are the most

SIDE-SPLITTING SCENES

—AND—

ASTOUNDING SURPRISES

The heroine, Ruth Brandon, is a beautifully drawn character, having all the soft feminine graces with some of the self-reliance engendered by the residence on the border.

The first chapters of this story appeared in THE WEEKLY MAIL of December 6th, and will be continued in large instalments until concluded.

THE WEEKLY MAIL

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MR. BEECHER ON THEATRES.

The Propriety and Advantage of Visiting Them.

CHANGE OF VIEW REGARDING ACTORS AND THEATRES

After Rev. Mr. Beecher had fully answered a young man's inquiry as to how the Trinity should be addressed in public worship, at the Plymouth church, prayer-meeting, a white-haired old gentleman in the front seat said that he desired to

ASK A QUESTION. If it seemed personal or inoffensive he craved forgiveness. Amid profound stillness he read the following, but in so low a tone and so rapidly that one-half the large audience could only hear an occasional word—

"I have heard you state on one or more occasions, publicly, that you had never been to the theatre, at the same time advising others not to visit it. Some time since, I think you told me you went to see 'Pinafore,' which play, judging from the attention it received from church members, must have been a most edifying, attractive, and intellectual one. You have not, told me, but the papers have, that you have recently been to various plays. If this information is correct, I would, and I think others would, thank you to tell us what has caused the change in your habits in this respect."

"Are the moral objections you had to the theatre removed?"

"Not referring to any particular establishment, but taking the average theatre of the age into it, in your opinion, is it a good place for a man to go with his children?"

"In Brooklyn I think there are six or eight theatres which have performances every evening except Sunday, with frequent matinees. A great many of the people who frequent these places have the appearance of poverty. The receipts at all of them combined amount to several hundred thousand dollars annually."

If we, by our example, influence the attendance of others who cannot afford to go, is the advantage to ourselves in the amusement and instruction we receive, ample justification of our attendance?"

Mr. Beecher settled himself comfortably in his chair before answering, and fixed his eyes on the clock. Some of the ladies exchanged significant glances. Mr. Beecher said that when a newspaper correspondent or an inquisitive "moral" man came to his home and endeavored to pry into his private affairs, he considered him so impertinent that he felt like kicking him from the door; but a question like the one propounded, affecting public morals, was right and proper. "I don't do anything in a corner," continued the pastor, dropping into a conversational tone, "and when I went to the theatre, I went in broad daylight. If I go again, I shall go in the same way. I happen to be in a situation which induces some newspapers to keep the public fully informed where I go and what I do. Actually, if I wear a new coat, some of them will mention it. So I do as I have a mind to, in accordance with my ideas of right, and don't care what people say."

Mr. Beecher said, continuing that he was brought up to believe that the theatre was a thing of evil, and that going to one was almost as bad as going to the devil. He went West early in life, where theatrical companies were made up of strolling, inferior players, and entered to a depraved class of the population. When he came to New York and Brooklyn, his time was too much engrossed by his work to pay any attention to the theatre, but he read with great interest a printed discussion that was then going on, in which the late Dr. Bellows and others participated. Mr. Beecher concluded that the opera and theatre were separate and should be so considered. He did not care much for opera—that is, he was not particularly fond of music arranged in that form. But the librettos in some of the leading operas were simply inequities, and it was a mercy that they were printed partially in Italian or French, which most Americans

did not understand and could not read. He recollected a speech made by a revered friend of his, the Rev. Dr. Charles Hall, upon a theatrical occasion, in which he said that attendance at the theatre was a thing which every intelligent man should settle with his own conscience. It was a good deal like going to a hotel. There were good hotels and there were bad hotels. All that a man must do was to keep away from the bad hotels. After reading a great deal about the drama,

HE DECIDED TO GO AND SEE SALVINO in "Othello." If there was nothing worse in the theatre than he saw there, he did not know what non-theatre-goers made such a "rumpus" about. He was glad that he went.

When Mr. Irving came, a cherished member of the best society in the British kingdom, even a friend of royalty, Mr. Beecher attended the matinee last Saturday afternoon. He enjoyed the acting thoroughly, and would like to go again. If any one cared to know, he would advise them one way or the other. To the young man of slender means, he would say, "Don't go!" And any amusement which so absorbs the attention that proper care is not given to business or daily work is hurtful. Mr. Beecher considered that his habits were so well formed that he could go to a play without having them destroyed. In answer to a question, whether he was a man who said that he didn't know, he hadn't concluded his investigations. When he did go he went as a Christian gentleman who had a right to do as he pleased, in accord with his own conscience. "As to my example to young men," he concluded, "I advise every young man to follow in my footsteps, and when you are seventy years old, go and see the best actors you can find."

Several people remained to have a further talk with Mr. Beecher on the subject after the benediction was pronounced.

The Source of Longfellow's Last Inspiration. San Blas is hardly more than an extensive thatched village. On the bluff behind it exist the ruins of an ancient, substantial San Blas shaken to pieces by an earthquake. Some old bronze bells from its church have been brought down and set up on some rude wooden trestles on the ground in front of the poor chapel, without a bell, which now fills the ecclesiastical needs of the place. This arrangement is sometimes referred to as *la torre de San Blas*—the steeple of San Blas.

My eight sheets of these bell-tolls on a fly-leaf of my note book in the first instance came to have an importance far beyond its own merits. I have the gratification of knowing that it proved to be the source of nothing less than the last inspiration of Longfellow. The great and good poet died on the 24th of March, 1862. In his portfolio was found his final work, "The Bells of San Blas," dated March 15, which afterward appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. His memorandum book contained a phrase, as a suggestion of a poem, to the number and page of *Harper's Magazine* of the same month, in which the sketch was published.

An English clergyman, Thomas Morris Hughes by name, pleaded guilty at Warwick a few weeks ago to a charge of bigamy on which he had been previously convicted. He was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. His age is 45.

OUR JACK'S COME HOME TO-DAY.

Allegretto con anima.

By W. J. DEEVERS.

Our Jack's come home from sea to-day, And brown and bronzed is he, For many a year he's been a-way, From his home, his love, and me— Yet his heart is true, as it was of old, His spirit is light and gay, You lit-tle know the joy we felt, When he came home to-day, Our Jack's come home to-day, Our Jack's come home to-day, The good ship Jane's in port a-gain, Our Jack's come home to-day, Jack's come home to-day, Our Jack's come home to-day, Our Jack's come home from sea to-day, And a jovial tar is he, Full many a tale of storm and gale, His comrades with envious glances, And of sighs he's seen in lands he's been, So strange, so far away, All danger's past, he's safe at last, Our Jack's come home to-day, All danger's past, he's safe at last, Our Jack's come home to-day.

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A Note.

An Irish member of Parliament is responsible for the following story, which, if not true, ought to be—He says he was in a railway carriage when a little old gentleman, of very respectable appearance, entered with a little basket of fish, which he carefully deposited in the rack above his head. When the train started the Irish member began to smoke, to which the old gentleman strongly objected, as he hated the disgusting smell, and as it was not a smoking carriage. The Irishman paying no heed to his remonstrance, he fairly lost the little temper he ever possessed, and, snatching the cigar from the smoker, threw it out of the carriage window with a triumphant shout of "There!" The Irish member waited a few minutes, and then saying, "What a disgusting smell there is of fish!" he threw the old gentleman's basket of fish out of the window with the same triumphant shout of "There!" Collapse of the old gentleman, and triumph of the Irish member.

A few days ago a London clerk slipped on a piece of orange peel, broke his leg, was taken to the hospital, became delirious and died within 24 hours.

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