

## LIFE IN THE BRICK MOON.

[From the Papers of Colonel Frederic Ingham.]

## THEY DECLARE INDEPENDENCE.

HOW astonishing it is to think that we so readily accept a position when we once understand it. You buy a new house. You are fool enough to take out a staircase that you may put in a bathing-room. This will be done in a fortnight, everybody tells you, and then everybody begins. Plumbers, masons, carpenters, plasterers, skimmers, bell-hangers, speaking-tube men, men who make furnace-pipe, paper-hangers, men who scrape off the old paper, and other men who take off the old paint with alkali, gas men, city water men, and painters begin. To them are joined a considerable number of furnace-men's assistants, stovepipe-men's assistants, masons' assistants, and hodmen who assist the assistants of the masons, the furnace-men, and the pipe-men. For a day or two these all take possession of the house and reduce it to chaos. In the language of Scripture, they enter in and dwell there. Then you revisit it at the end of the fortnight, and find it in chaos, with the woman whom you employed to wash the attics the only person on the scene. You ask her where the paper-hanger is; and she says he can do nothing because the plaster is not dry. You ask why the plaster is not dry, and are told it is because the furnace man has not come. You send for him, and he says he did come, but the stove-pipe man was away. You send for him, and he says he lost a day in coming, but that the mason had not cut the right hole in the chimney. You go and find the mason, and he says they are all fools, and that there is nothing in the house that need take two days to finish.

Then you curse, not the day in which you were born, but the day in which bath-rooms were invented. You

say, truly, that your father and mother, from whom you inherit every moral and physical faculty you prize, never had a bath-room till they were past sixty, yet they thrived, and their children. You sneak through back streets, fearful lest your friends shall ask you when your house will be finished. You are sunk in wretchedness, unable even to read your proofs accurately, far less able to attend the primary meetings of the party with which you vote, or to discharge any of the duties of a good citizen. Life is wholly embittered to you.

Yet, six weeks after, you sit before a soft-coal fire, in your new house, with the feeling that you have always lived there. You are not even grateful that you are there. You have forgotten the plumber's name; and if you met in the street that nice carpenter that drove things through, you would just nod to him, and would not think of kissing him or embracing him.

Thus completely have you accepted the situation.

Let me confess that the same experience is that with which, at this writing, I regard the BRICK MOON. It is there in ether. I cannot keep it. I cannot get it down. I cannot well go to it, — though possibly that might be done, as you will see. They are all very happy there, — much happier, as far as I can see, than if they lived in sixth floors in Paris, in lodgings in London, or even in tenement-houses in Phoenix Place, Boston. There are disadvantages attached to their position; but there are also advantages. And what most of all tends to our accepting the situation is, that there is "nothing that we can do about it," as Q. says, but to keep up our correspondence with them, and to express our sympathies.

For them, their responsibilities are reduced, in somewhat the same pro-

portion as the gravitation which binds them down,—I had almost said to earth,—which binds them down to brick, I mean. This decrease of responsibility must make them as light-hearted as the loss of gravitation makes them light-bodied.

On which point I ask for a moment's attention. And as these sheets leave my hand, an illustration turns up, which well serves me. It is the 23d of October. Yesterday morning all wakeful women in New England were sure there was some one under the bed. This is a certain sign of an earthquake. And when we read the evening newspapers we were made sure that there had been an earthquake. What blessings the newspapers are,—and how much information they give us! Well, they said it was not very severe here, but perhaps it was more severe elsewhere; hopes really arising in the editorial mind, that in some Caraccas or Lisbon all churches and the cathedral might have fallen. I did not hope for that. But I did have just the faintest feeling, that *if*—if—if—it should prove that the world had blown up into six or eight pieces, and they had gone off into separate orbits, life would be vastly easier for all of us, on whichever bit we happened to be.

That thing has happened, they say, once. Whenever the big planet between Mars and Jupiter blew up, and divided himself into one hundred and two or more asteroids, the people on each one only knew there had been an earthquake, until they read their morning journals. And then, all that they knew at first was that telegraphic communication had ceased, beyond—say two hundred miles. Gradually people and despatches came in, who said that they had parted company with some of the other islands and continents. But, as I say, on each piece the people not only weighed much less, but were much lighter-hearted, had less responsibility.

Now will you imagine the enthusiasm here, at Miss Wilby's school, when it should be announced that geography,

in future, would be confined to the study of the region east of the Mississippi and west of the Atlantic,—the earth having parted at the seams so named. No more study of Italian, German, French, or Slavonic,—the people speaking those languages being now in different orbits or other worlds. Imagine also the superior ease of the office-work of the A. B. C. F. M. and kindred societies, the duties of instruction and civilizing, of evangelizing in general, being reduced within so much narrower bounds. For you and me also, who cannot decide what Mr. Gladstone ought to do with the land tenure in Ireland, and who distress ourselves so much about it in conversation, what a satisfaction to know that Great Britain is flung off with one rate of movement, Ireland with another, and the Isle of Man with another, into space, with no more chance of meeting again than there is that you shall have the same hand at whist to-night that you had last night! Even Victoria would sleep easier, and I am sure Mr. Gladstone would.

Thus, I say, were Orcutt's and Brannan's responsibilities so diminished, that after the first I began to see that their contracted position had its decided compensating ameliorations.

In these views, I need not say, the women of our little circle never shared. After we got the new telegraph arrangement in good running-order, I observed that Polly and Annie Haliburton had many private conversations, and the secret came out one morning, when, rising early in the cabins, we men found they had deserted us; and then, going in search of them, found them running the signal boards in and out as rapidly as they could, to tell Mrs. Brannan and the bride Alice Orcutt that flounces were worn an inch and a half deeper, and that people trimmed now with harmonizing colors and not with contrasts. I did not say that I believed they wore fig-leaves in B. M., but that was my private impression.

After all, it was hard to laugh at the

girls, as these ladies will be called, should they live to be as old as Helen was when she charmed the Trojan senate (that was ninety-three, if Heyne be right in his calculations). It was hard to laugh at them, because this was simple benevolence, and the same benevolence led to a much more practical suggestion, when Polly came to me and told me she had been putting up some baby things for little Io and Phœbe, and some playthings for the older children, and she thought we might "send up a bundle."

Of course we could. There were the Flies still moving! or we might go ourselves!

[And here the reader must indulge me in a long parenthesis. I beg him to bear me witness that I never made one before. This parenthesis is on the tense that I am obliged to use in sending to the press these minutes. The reader observes that the last transactions mentioned happen in April and May, 1871. Those to be narrated are the sequence of those already told. Speaking of them in 1870 with the coarse tenses of the English language is very difficult. One needs, for accuracy, a pure future, a second future, a paulo-post future, and a paulum-ante future, none of which does this language have. Failing this, one would be glad of an a-orist, — tense without time, — if the grammarians will not swoon at hearing such language. But the English tongue hath not that either. Doth the learned reader remember that the Hebrew, — language of history and prophecy, — hath only a past and a future tense, but hath no present? Yet that language succeeded tolerably in expressing the present griefs or joys of David and of Solomon. Bear with me, then, O critic! if even in 1870 I use the so-called past tenses in narrating what remaineth of this history up to the summer of 1872. End of the parenthesis.]

On careful consideration, however, no one volunteers to go. To go, if you observe, would require that a man envelope himself thickly in as-

bestos or some similar non-conducting substance, leap boldly on the rapid Flies, and so be shot through the earth's atmosphere in two seconds and a fraction, carrying with him all the time in a non-conducting receiver the condensed air he needed, and landing quietly on B. M. by a pre-calculated orbit. At the bottom of our hearts I think we were all afraid. Some of us confessed to fear; others said, and said truly, that the population of the Moon was already dense, and that it did not seem reasonable or worth while, on any account, to make it denser. Nor has any movement been renewed for going. But the plan of the bundle of "things" seemed more feasible, as the things would not require oxygen. The only precaution seemed to be that which was necessary for protecting the parcel against combustion as it shot through the earth's atmosphere. We had not asbestos enough. It was at first proposed to pack them all in one of Professor Horsford's safes. But when I telegraphed this plan to Orcutt, he demurred. Their atmosphere was but shallow, and with a little too much force the corner of the safe might knock a very bad hole in the surface of his world. He said if we would send up first a collection of things of no great weight, but of considerable bulk, he would risk that, but he would rather have no compact metals.

I satisfied myself, therefore, with a plan which I still think good. Making the parcel up in heavy old woollen carpets, and cording it with worsted cords, we would case it in a carpet-bag larger than itself, and fill in the interstice with dry sand, as our best non-conductor; cording this tightly again, we would renew the same casing, with more sand; and so continually offer surfaces of sand and woollen, till we had five separate layers between the parcel and the air. Our calculation was that a perceptible time would be necessary for the burning and disintegrating of each sand-bag. If each one, on the average, would stand two fifths of a second, the inner parcel would get

through the earth's atmosphere unconsumed. If, on the other hand, they lasted a little longer, the bag, as it fell on B. M., would not be unduly heavy. Of course we could take their night for the experiment, so that we might be sure they should all be in bed and out of the way.

We had very funny and very merry times in selecting things important enough and at the same time bulky and light enough to be safe. Alice and Bertha at once insisted that there must be room for the children's playthings. They wanted to send the most approved of the old ones, and to add some new presents. There was a woolly sheep in particular, and a watering-pot that Rose had given Fanny, about which there was some sentiment; boxes of dominos, packs of cards, magnetic fishes, bows and arrows, checker-boards and croquet sets. Polly and Annie were more considerate. Down to Coleman and Company they sent an order for pins, needles, hooks and eyes, buttons, tapes, and I know not what essentials. India-rubber shoes for the children, Mrs. Haliburton insisted on sending. Haliburton himself bought open-eye-shut-eye dolls, though I felt that wax had been, since Icarus's days, the worst article in such an adventure. For the babies he had india-rubber rings: he had tin cows and carved wooden lions for the bigger children, drawing-tools for those older yet, and a box of crotchet tools for the ladies. For my part I piled in literature, — a set of my own works, the Legislative Reports of the State of Maine, Jean Ingelow, as I said or intimated, and both volumes of the Earthly Paradise. All these were packed in sand, bagged, and corded, — bagged, sanded, and corded again, — yet again and again, — five times. Then the whole awaited Orcutt's orders and our calculations.

At last the moment came. We had, at Orcutt's order, reduced the revolutions of the Flies to 7230, which was, as nearly as he knew, the speed on the fatal night. We had soaked the bag

for near twelve hours, and, at the moment agreed upon, rolled it on the Flies, and saw it shot into the air. It was so small that it went out of sight too soon for us to see it take fire.

Of course we watched eagerly for signal time. They were all in bed on B. M. when we let fly. But the despatch was a sad disappointment.

107. "Nothing has come through but two croquet balls, and a china horse. But we shall send the boys hunting in the bushes, and we may find more."

108. "Two Harpers and an Atlantic, badly singed. But we can read all but the parts which were most dry."

109. "We see many small articles revolving round us which may perhaps fall in."

They never did fall in, however. The truth was that all the bags had burned through. The sand, I suppose, went to its own place, wherever that was. And all the other things in our bundle became little asteroids or aerolites in orbits of their own, except a well-disposed score or two, which persevered far enough to get within the attraction of Brick Moon, and to take to revolving there, not having hit quite square as the croquet balls did. They had five volumes of the Congressional Globe whirling round like bats within a hundred feet of their heads. Another body, which I am afraid was "The Ingham Papers," flew a little higher, not quite so heavy. Then there was an absurd procession of the woolly sheep, a china cow, a pair of india-rubbers, a lobster Haliburton had chosen to send, a wooden lion, the wax doll, a Salter's balance, the New York Observer, the bow and arrows, a Nuremberg nanny-goat, Rose's watering-pot, and the magnetic fishes, which gravely circled round and round them slowly, and made the petty zodiac of their petty world.

We have never sent another parcel since, but we probably shall at Christmas, gauging the Flies perhaps to one revolution more. The truth is, that al-

though we have never stated to each other in words our difference of opinion or feeling, there is a difference of habit of thought in our little circle as to the position which the B. M. holds. Somewhat similar is the difference of habit of thought in which different statesmen of England regard their colonies.

Is B. M. a part of our world, or is it not? Should its inhabitants be encouraged to maintain their connections with us, or is it better for them to "accept the situation" and gradually wean themselves from us and from our affairs? It would be idle to determine this question in the abstract: it is perhaps idle to decide any question of casuistry in the abstract. But, in practice, there are constantly arising questions which really require some decision of this abstract problem for their solution.

For instance, when that terrible breach occurred in the Sandemanian church, which parted it into the Old School and New School parties, Haliburton thought it very important that Brannan and Orcutt and the church in B. M. under Brannan's ministry should give in their adhesion to our side. Their church would count one more in our registry, and the weight of its influence would not be lost. He therefore spent eight or nine days in telegraphing, from the early proofs, a copy of the address of the Chatauque Synod to Brannan, and asked Brannan if he were not willing to have his name signed to it when it was printed. And the only thing which Haliburton takes sorely in the whole experience of the Brick Moon, from the beginning, is that neither Orcutt nor Brannan has ever sent one word of acknowledgment of the despatch. Once, when Haliburton was very low-spirited, I heard him even say that he believed they had never read a word of it, and that he thought he and Rob. Shea had had their labor for their pains in running the signals out and in.

Then he felt quite sure that they would have to establish civil government there. So he made up an excel-

lent collection of books, — De Lolme on the British Constitution; Montesquieu on Laws; Story, Kent, John Adams, and all the authorities here; with ten copies of his own address delivered before the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society of Podunk, on the "Abnormal Truths of Social Order." He telegraphed to know what night he should send them, and Orcutt replied: —

129. "Go to thunder with your old law-books. We have not had a primary meeting nor a justice court since we have been here, and, D. V., we never will have."

Haliburton says this is as bad as the state of things in Kansas, when, because Frank Pierce would not give them any judges or laws to their mind, they lived a year or so without any. Orcutt added in his next despatch: —

130. "Have not you any new novels? Send up Scribe and the Arabian Nights and Robinson Crusoe and the Three Guardsmen, and Mrs. Whitney's books. We have Thackeray and Miss Austen."

When he read this, Haliburton felt as if they were not only light-footed but light-headed. And he consulted me quite seriously as to telegraphing to them "Pycroft's Course of Reading." I coaxed him out of that, and he satisfied himself with a serious expostulation with George as to the way in which their young folks would grow up. George replied by telegraphing Brannan's last sermon, 1 Thessalonians iv. 11. The sermon had four heads, must have occupied an hour and a half in delivery, and took five nights to telegraph. I had another engagement, so that Haliburton had to sit it all out with his eye to Shubael: and he has never entered on that line of discussion again. It was as well, perhaps, that he got enough of it.

The women have never had any misunderstandings. When we had received two or three hundred despatches from B. M., Annie Haliburton came to me and said, in that pretty way of hers, that she thought they had a right to their turn again. She said this lore about the Albert Nyanza and the

North Pole was all very well, but, for her part, she wanted to know how they lived, what they did, and what they talked about, whether they took summer journeys, and how and what was the form of society where thirty-seven people lived in such close quarters. This about "the form of society" was merely wool pulled over my eyes. So she said she thought her husband and I had better go off to the Biennial Convention at Assampink, as she knew we wanted to do, and she and Bridget and Polly and Cordelia would watch for the signals, and would make the replies. She thought they would get on better if we were out of the way.

So we went to the convention, as she called it, which was really not properly a convention, but the Forty-fifth Biennial General Synod, and we left the girls to their own sweet way.

Shall I confess that they kept no record of their own signals, and did not remember very accurately what they were? "I was not going to keep a string of 'says I's' and 'says she's,'" said Polly, boldly. "It shall not be written on my tomb that I have left more annals for people to file or study or bind or dust or catalogue." But they told us that they had begun by asking the "bricks" if they remembered what Maria Theresa said to her ladies-in-waiting.\* Quicker than any signal had ever been answered, George Orcutt's party replied from the moon, "We hear, and we obey." Then the women-kind had it all to themselves. The brick-women explained at once to our girls that they had sent their men round to the other side to cut ice, and that they were manning the telescope, and running the signals for themselves, and that they could have a nice talk without any bother about the law-books or the magnetic pole. As I say, I do not know what questions Polly and Annie put; but, — to give them their

\* Maria Theresa's husband, Francis, Duke of Tuscany, was hanging about loose one day, and the Empress, who had got a little tired, said to the maids of honor, "Girls, whenever you marry, take care and choose a husband who has something to do outside of the house."

due, — they had put on paper a coherent record of the results arrived at in the answers; though, what were the numbers of the despatches, or in what order they came, I do not know; for the session of the synod kept us at Assampink for two or three weeks.

Mrs. Brannan was the spokesman. "We tried a good many experiments about day and night. It was very funny at first, not to know when it would be light and when dark, for really the names day and night do not express a great deal for us. Of course the pendulum clocks all went wrong till the men got them overhauled, and I think watches and clocks both will soon go out of fashion. But we have settled down, on much the old hours, getting up, without reference to daylight, by our great gong, at your eight o'clock. But when the eclipse season comes, we vary from that for signalling.

"We still make separate families, and Alice's is the seventh. We tried hotel life, and we liked it, for there has never been the first quarrel here. You can't quarrel here, where you are never sick, never tired, and need not be ever hungry. But we were satisfied that it was nicer for the children, and for all round, to live separately, and come together at parties, to church, at signal time, and so on. We had something to say then, something to teach, and something to learn.

"Since the carices developed so nicely into flax, we have had one great comfort, which we had lost before, in being able to make and use paper. We have had great fun, and we think the children have made great improvement in writing novels for the Union. The Union is the old Union for Christian work that we had in dear old No. 9. We have two serial novels going on, one called 'Diana of Carrotook,' and the other called 'Ups and Downs'; the first by Levi Ross, and the other by my Blanche. They are really very good, and I wish we could send them to you. But they would not be worth despatching.

"We get up at eight; dress, and fix

up at home ; a sniff of air, as people choose ; breakfast ; and then we meet for prayers outside. Where we meet depends on the temperature ; for we can choose any temperature we want, from boiling water down, which is convenient. After prayers an hour's talk, lounging, walking, and so on ; no flirting, but a favorite time with the young folks.

"Then comes work. Three hours' head-work is the maximum in that line. Of women's work, as in all worlds, there are twenty-four in one of your days, but for my part I like it. Farmers and carpenters have their own laws, as the light serves and the seasons. Dinner is seven hours after breakfast began ; always an hour long, as breakfast was. Then every human being sleeps for an hour. Big gong again, and we ride, walk, swim, telegraph, or what not, as the case may be. We have no horses yet, but the Shangaes are coming up into very good dodos and ostriches, quite big enough for a trot for the children.

"Only two persons of a family take tea at home. The rest always go out to tea without invitation. At 8 P. M. big gong again, and we meet in 'Grace,' which is the prettiest hall, church, concert-room, that you ever saw. We have singing, lectures, theatre, dancing, talk, or what the mistress of the night determines, till the curfew sounds at ten, and then we all go home. Evening prayers are in the separate households, and every one is in bed by midnight. The only law on the statute-book is that every one shall sleep nine hours out of every twenty-four.

"Only one thing interrupts this general order. Three taps on the gong means 'telegraph,' and then, I tell you, we are all on hand.

"You cannot think how quickly the days and years go by!"

Of course, however, as I said, this could not last. We could not subdue our world, and be spending all our time in telegraphing our dear B. M. Could it be possible? — perhaps it was

possible, — that they there had something else to think of and to do, besides attending to our affairs. Certainly their indifference to Grant's fourth Proclamation, and to Mr. Fish's celebrated protocol in the Tahiti business, looked that way. Could it be that that little witch of a Belle Brannan really cared more for their performance of Midsummer Night's Dream, or her father's birthday, than she cared for that pleasant little account I telegraphed up to all the children, of the way we went to muster when we were boys together? Ah well! I ought not to have supposed that all worlds were like this old world. Indeed, I often say this is the queerest world I ever knew. Perhaps theirs is not so queer, and it is I who am the oddity.

Of course it could not last. We just arranged correspondence days, when we would send to them, and they to us. I was meanwhile turned out from my place at Tamworth Observatory. Not but I did my work well, and Polly hers. The observer's room was a miracle of neatness. The children were kept in the basement. Visitors were received with great courtesy ; and all the fees were sent to the treasurer ; he got three dollars and eleven cents one summer, — that was the year General Grant came there ; and that was the largest amount that they ever received from any source but begging. I was not unfaithful to my trust. Nor was it for such infidelity that I was removed. No! But it was discovered that I was a Sandemanian ; a Glassite, as in derision I was called. The annual meeting of the trustees came round. There was a large Mechanics' Fair in Tamworth at the time, and an Agricultural Convention. There was no horse-race at the convention, but there were two competitive examinations in which running horses competed with each other, and trotting horses competed with each other, and five thousand dollars was given to the best runner and the best trotter. These causes drew all the trustees together. The Rev. Cephas Philpotts presided. His doctrines with

regard to free agency were considered much more sound than mine. He took the chair, — in that pretty observatory parlor, which Polly had made so bright with smilax and ivy. Of course I took no chair; I waited, as a janitor should, at the door. Then a brief address. Dr. Philpotts trusted that the observatory might always be administered in the interests of science, of true science; of that science which rightly distinguishes between unlicensed liberty and true freedom; between the unrestrained volition and the freedom of the will. He became eloquent, he became noisy. He sat down. Then three other men spoke, on similar subjects. Then the executive committee which had appointed me was dismissed with thanks. Then a new executive committee was chosen, with Dr. Philpotts at the head. The next day I was discharged. And the next week the Philpotts family moved into the observatory, and their second girl now takes care of the instruments.

I returned to the cure of souls and to healing the hurt of my people. On observation days somebody runs down to No. 9, and by means of Shubael communicates with B. M. We love them, and they love us all the same.

Nor do we grieve for them as we did. Coming home from Pigeon Harbor in October, with those nice Wadsworth people, we fell to talking as to the why and wherefore of the summer life we had led. How was it that it was so charming? And why were we a little loath to come back to more comfortable surroundings? "I hate the school," said George Wadsworth. "I hate the making calls," said his mother. "I hate the office hour," said

her poor husband; "if there were only a dozen I would not mind, but seventeen hundred thousand in sixty minutes is too many." So that led to asking how many of us there had been at Pigeon Cove. The children counted up all the six families, — the Haliburtons, the Wadsworths, the Pontefracts, the Midges, the Hayeses, and the Inghams, and the two good-natured girls, — thirty-seven in all, — and the two babies born this summer. "Really," said Mrs. Wadsworth, "I have not spoken to a human being besides these since June; and what is more, Mrs. Ingham, I have not wanted to. We have really lived in a little world of our own."

"World of our own!" Polly fairly jumped from her seat, to Mrs. Wadsworth's wonder. So we had — lived in a world of our own. Polly reads no newspaper since the "Sandemanian" was merged. She has a letter or two tumble in sometimes, but not many; and the truth was that she had been more secluded from General Grant and Mr. Gladstone and the Khedive, and the rest of the important people, than had Brannan or Ross or any of them!

And it had been the happiest summer she had ever known.

Can it be possible that all human sympathies can thrive, and all human powers be exercised, and all human joys increase, if we live with all our might with the thirty or forty people next to us, telegraphing kindly to all other people, to be sure? Can it be possible that our passion for large cities, and large parties, and large theatres, and large churches, develops no faith nor hope nor love which would not find aliment and exercise in a little "world of our own"?