

THE LITTLE FINGER OF THE GOD

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Collectors of the antique and the curious know Mr. Levy and his queer little shop, in a queer little alley, that salaried of all hues and tonages and garbs and characters take as a short cut to and from the docks. All day and much of the night they pass in two thin lines, a straight line toward and a zigzag toward their ships. A good many look in to see Mr. Levy on their first joyous journey ashore, for he comes before the public house or the opium den. A few look in to see him on their final journey aboard, for when he has taken their payment there. He is partial to the sailors and they are partial to him. I think he went to sea in his young days, for he has a sailor's air. It is not the best of places for selling his wares, Mr. Levy owns, but it's a rare good place for buying them.

"There's nobody picks up things like a sailor," he often told me. "They've knocked about all over the world and know what's out of the common, and when they see a thing they fancy they generally carry it past the first shop where they're treated fair; and as for collectors, they'll come anywhere after once they find you've good stuff and tell the truth about it."

I have dealt with Mr. Levy for several years, and I am bound to say that I consider him a truthful man, in spite of the following story. It came one day when I was selling the last of a lot of things that my brother sent home from Burmah, and this was the way of it:

"Forty pounds for the lot," he pronounced, "and you can keep the job." It was a queer little idol with two gilt heads.

"I'd reckoned on fifty," I said. He smiled. "Well, nearly. Make it forty guineas and take the job, as you call it."

He tapped his teeth with his pencil. "I'll make it forty guineas," he agreed, "but I won't give you the job until you've dealt in them; and if I were you I'd advise your brother to leave them alone, the next time you write. Most of them aren't pukka jewels, on'y shams; but you may happen to get a good one or two."

"Come, come, Mr. Levy," I protested. "You don't mean to tell me that you believe in them?"

He spread out his left hand and held it up to me. I saw that the little finger was missing.

"It's the little finger of a joss now," he stated grimly; "a god they call him."

"Well," I said, "I'll take forty guineas—and the story."

He considered thoughtfully. "I don't suppose it matters now," he decided, "but if you tell many years ago; but if you tell many years ago, keep names out of it."

And this is the story that Mr. Levy told me. It was a long one, and I'll tell it in the dark little parlor behind his shop. An American sailor brought it here in a cab. It was life size, and so exact to life that, upon my word, I almost thought he was pulling a body out of the sand first, and then I stood and stared at it and didn't say a word.

It was a man—leas'tways a god—carved out of a fleshy brown wood that passed for the natural color of the face and hands without touching up. The hair was real hair, black and long and harsh with age. The teeth were real teeth, of a judged, though how they were put in the mouth, which was only slightly open, I could never make out. The head seemed to be cut out of solid block, and I couldn't see any carving or anything under the hair. The eyes were some kind of glass, and I couldn't see how they were put in, either; and another curious thing was that the clothing was made of a different kind of wood, and where it opened you could see the flesh brown body, but you couldn't find how it was got over the body or the body underneath it. The cloak was hard black wood carved with flowers—well not exactly flowers, but figures shaped exactly like flowers, as you see in some wall papers. The hem of it was ornamented with metal beaten in to form a smaller flowery pattern. The sailor called it gold, but it wasn't. It was a composition of brass, but I've never seen the exact kind before or since. There were buckles of it on the sandals. The sandals were just an ordinary shape cut out of yellowish wood, but the legs were covered with stockings which in unusual—stocking carved out of ebony, and yet as thin as silk and looking like open lace, showing the brown legs through. The figure was squatting cross legged and it had a dagger in its right hand. The dagger was steel, very real steel, and as sharp as a razor and engraved with deep cut lines. All the engravings represented portions of the human body: hands and feet and ears and noses and fingers and toes and two heads—one on each side. The figure wasn't sound anything extraordinary from my account, but if you'd seen it, the workmanship was wonderful, wonderful!

"It's a beauty, isn't it?" the sailor said, when I had looked at it for a whole minute.

"Yes," I agreed. "It's good."

"What will you give for it?" he asked.

"Umpt," I said. I was a little puzzled myself to know what it was worth. "How did you come by it?"

"That's my business," he answered. "But I'll tell you this. The law can't touch me, or you—not over here."

I looked at the man—I'm a pretty fair judge of men and I believed in him. And besides, if I had been stolen in this country I should have heard of it. He'd robbed some joss house over sea, I made no doubt, and they'd never trouble me. I was a little puzzled myself to know what it was worth. "How did you come by it?"

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and I walked to the door over there and called into the shop.

"Isaac," I said, "come here for a minute. I don't open my safe alone with a stranger of that kind."

Isaac came in and I got out the money and paid the American sailor. Then I sent Isaac back to the shop.

"Now," I said, "I've bought it. Tell me what you can."

"If I wouldn't tell you when I was selling," he said, "it isn't likely I'll tell you when I've sold; but I warn you of one thing. You go for small profits and quick returns, and get rid of it as soon as you can, and if you have any brown men come after it—men with broad noses like that—be pointed to the joss—and no eye-brows like that, Isaac, and a left little finger gone, like that—then if you have them come after it, you take whatever they'll give and vlose sharp. That's all. Good morning!" And he went.

"Ah!" I said to myself. "He did steal it from a joss house. If they're following by any chance—well, I'm not afraid of any dagoes, but I don't want a fuss. I'll put it away for a month or so. All they've given up looking round here."

So I stowed it in this big cupboard just behind me and didn't mention it to a soul for a fortnight and told Isaac to hold his tongue. He can do that, or he wouldn't be here. Then I had a call from a strange gentleman, a tall, thin, very dark man of about forty-five dressed all in black; the sort who's spent his life among antiquities till he's grown to look a bit like them. Professor Setai-Lee, F. R. S., he called himself. He came in to inquire about some ancient Japanese bronzes that were made in England; at least that's what he made out he came in for. A lot of them best about the bush first.

"Do you guarantee these?" he asked.

"No," I said, "I don't." And he smiled. "Made by Hammerton's," he told

A chance word let slip! No. You'd better know nothing about it. How did you come by it?"

I told him, and he listened with his eyes on it nodding continually.

"You were wise not to show it," he said, "and if you take my advice you'll dispose of it quickly for what you can get—from an amateur! He won't give you what it's worth because he won't know what it is. Those who do know won't buy it, unless—is it whole? Quite whole?"

"There's a little finger gone," I admitted.

"Ah-h-h!" he said. "Ah-h-h! I might have known." He looked at it and muttered to himself. "It looks like an accidental breakage," he said, "and if so it may have been lost. If I were sure of that."

"What difference does it make?" I asked.

He sat down and looked at me.

"If they have the finger," he said, "it will bring them to it. You may smile, but—well, it makes this difference, anyhow. If I believed that the finger was lost I'd buy the figure for a thousand pounds!"

"Seeing that you can't know," I said, "it's a cheap offer. Anyhow, if you'll tell me what it is I'll advertise it and take my risk."

He shook his head.

"You'd be a dead man in a week if you did! That's why I wouldn't tell you. The name they call it means—well, it means several things—The God Who Repays, The God Who Strikes. It does, or they do. It is hard to know how much is the priest's doing and how much the god's. Von Struymer holds that the priests are hypnotists and the god is only—but it's no use talking about it. I'll make you an offer. If you'll put it in your shop window for a month and if you have no trouble over it I'll assume that the little finger is lost and that they'll lower his voice—have lost trace of the god, and I'll run the risk and buy it for a thousand pounds. Otherwise—well, if they come for it I recommend you to give it to them

put him in the window, and we shall see what happens, but we're playing with edged tools, Mr. Levy."

And I put it in the window, as I have said, veiled and squatting on a prayer carpet, one of a dozen that wouldn't sell.

The boys and girls that hang about the alley came and rubbed their noses on the window and nicknamed him the Lohenglin. It was the time when he was in the papers, and that's a dozen years or more back, as you know. Nobody else took any notice for a couple of days, except an old sea captain who was drunk and wanted him for ten pounds. On the third day Isaac drew my attention to a dark chap—Lascar he called him, but he wasn't—with a wide nose and black eyes and hair, who might have been the joss's brother. He was standing in front of the window bowing, with his hands crossed over the back of his neck. I noticed that a finger was missing, the little finger of his left hand.

"I don't like the look of that chap," Isaac said. "It strikes me he's after our joss. We'll put the old gentleman in my bedroom when we shut up to-night."

I always kept anything specially valuable there, and I had an alarm bell to the door and bars to the window and a revolver handy beside my bed. So I slept soundly all that night, and when Isaac came in the morning—he did not sleep here then—two carried the old joss down stairs.

The next day there were two foreign men, as like as peas, and they had both lost the little finger of the left hand. When they saluted me the joss they chanted in a lingo that I did not understand, though I know a bit of most. Then they went off.

When Isaac was going to take him out of the window that night he stumbled forward and his head went on his knees and the old joss lifted his arm the one with the dagger, like a flash. I caught Isaac by the collar and jerked him back just in time. He must have touched a spring, but we could not find it. We wrapped

my arm and stopped me from running after them.

"It's no use," he declared, "you'll have to let it go. The wood's dagoes in the world." I said, "I'll advertise the thing with a sketch of it, and if you won't give me a thousand for it some one else will."

"Very likely!" he shrugged his shoulders—"if that's the price you put upon your life."

I turned a bit cold, for I knew that he understood a lot about those things.

"Look here," I offered, "seven hundred and fifty down and you can take it now."

"Not as a gift," he said, "unless—what did they say?"

"How do I know. It's all jabber, jabber, jabber, their talk. Do you know it?"

"Yes," he said, "oh, yes."

"Then stop and talk to them if they come back."

"No," he refused. "I don't want them to connect me with it, but I'll stay in your room and listen to them if you like."

They came back just after tea and went through the same pantomime as before, and when they had gone I went in and asked him what they said.

"They called to you to do obeisance to the god so that he could lift his little finger and go home, and when you did not do it they called to you 'The Neck to the God Who Strikes.' You'd better give it up and let me make the best terms for you that I can."

"Terms be—!" I cried in a rage.

"Very well," he said, "I've warned you." Then he went.

I took the joss up to my room again at night. I didn't get to sleep at first, and presently I heard a noise below and opened my window. The wooden-faced men were trying my lower windows. They ran away as fast as they could go, and I got back in bed and fell asleep.

I had the same dream as before, only I didn't wake till I had fallen

to it with their palms together. Then they bowed to me with their palms apart as if 'You see' was what they meant. Then they went.

"Isaac," I said, "I've had enough of this. Get out the hammer and the coal hammer and we'll smash the thing up." But the professor came out from behind the curtain door.

"No, no!" he begged excitedly. "No, no, would a sin. Such wonderful wares. You may have your thousand pounds yet. Come and listen to me."

We went into the shop parlor and sat down, and what he said was this: "You'd better give it up, and I don't take it, but suppose we can get them to give it up. What then?"

"It would murder one of us," I said.

"No, no. When I had it I'd soon find the spring and make it safe. Anyhow I'll risk the idea if I can get free from his followers."

"The professor persuades them to go," I declared.

"No," he said, "but—the god might!"

"The god?" I stared at him.

"They might mistake my voice for his—laugh—dry laugh—if they broke in, as they thought of doing last night, in the dark."

"I see!" I cried, "I see! I almost danced with delight; I was younger then and not so stout. 'You'll talk to them in their lingo as if you were the joss and tell them to go off and never come back, eh?'"

"I shall tell them that I (that is, the joss, as you call it) will not come to the finger. They haven't it, or they would have been here before you put him in the window."

"Do you seriously mean to say that a wooden figure would have brought them to it? Show them the way?"

"I mean it very seriously," he said. "And if they did find his little finger at any time—well, the risk will be mine, if they go to-night, and I buy it, if they don't."

"If they don't," I said, "so much the worse for them. I'm not afraid of a couple of wooden faced brown men."

We assumed that they would make an attempt for it that night. So we did not carry it upstairs, but set it in the middle of the shop, on a low-carved chair, inlaid with ivory, that looked like a throne—as I rather think it was. The black wood brought it didn't speak English well, and I could only make out that it was something to do with a 'great ju-ju,' called Ko-ko. We put a screen behind it, and the professor sat behind this room. It was dark except for a faint glimmer from the fanlight over the shop door. The shutters were up on the door and the window. The darkness got on my nerves, and whenever the professor stirred I jumped, thinking that it was the joss moving.

Twelve struck, one, two, then I heard a faint tap at the window of the shop parlor—the room we're in now. They were evidently trying to force the catch.

"They'll come close by me," I whispered, "hadn't I better move?"

"No," he said, "I'll stand back. You might knock something over and they'd hear. They can't see you. They'll be between you and the light—what there is. Keep quiet."

I kept quiet, shivering with excitement. It was anything else it wasn't from fear of them. I'll own that I didn't feel quite easy about the joss.

At last the fastening went back with a sharp "click." Then the window opened slowly. When I heard them in the room; and then they crept into the shop and stood just inside it, close to my elbow. The glimmer from the fanlight showed them. They saluted me the figure and spoke in that depreciating tones, and suddenly a voice came from it—well, I suppose it was the professor, but it sounded unearthly and angry. It seemed to be giving orders. When I stopped in place of the little finger—well, I judge by the feel. The professor and the two wooden faced dagoes were lifting the joss into a great basket with handles. They had lighted a lamp somewhere, and it shone upon the figure as they lifted it. It left side was toward me, and I happened to notice the left hand. The little finger was complete.

"Of course," Mr. Levy remarked when he had finished the story, "I was had carried the joss down stairs, and I had just finished a late breakfast when the professor turned up. He had been worrying over the business, he said, and he had come to urge me to give it up."

"For nothing," I cried. "Not I; but I'll take five hundred pounds, you can tell them."

"They will not pay," he said. "For one thing they would consider it an insult to the god to buy his freedom. It would be doubling his power to free himself. For another thing, they consider that you have done to him. But if you'll let it go I'll make the best terms that I can with them."

Just then the wooden faced man came in and went out in a hurry and took up a big knob kerf; the man who sold it to me said it came from the Pretoria Kafir police. But they did not run, only motioned to me to look at the joss. Then they pointed me out to him and chanted slowly. There was no one near it to touch a spring, but the arm with the dagger went slowly up, and quickly down. The two men bowed

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me, "some time last year. They've improved the bronze since."

"That's it," I said, "and that's how they're priced, if you look."

"So I saw or I shouldn't have come in. I don't want faked stuff. Now they're—he took up some little figures and examined them very carefully, using a microscope and tasting them with his tongue and holding them up to the light and then in the shade—they are modern Japanese forgery of earlier work," he pronounced, "but they've used genuine old metal melted down again. Clever, very clever! They'd take in many people who call themselves experts."

"Ah!" I said, "They aren't right, then? I wasn't sure. How did you tell?"

He explained it to me, and finding that he knew a lot about these things, I thought I'd ask him about the joss.

"I've got a figure in the back room," I said, "a sort of idol. That I can't place at all. I wish you'd have a look at it."

So he stepped in. Before I'd got the joss half way out of the cupboard—it was heavy and took a lot of moving—he'd pulled down the blinds of the window and door for fear any one should see, and it the man.

"Man alive!" he cried. "Man alive!"

He stared at it, and his mouth seemed to water.

"Do you know what it is?" I asked.

"Yes," he told me. "I know. It's a friend, you'd better not know."

peaceably."

"Who may they be?" I asked.

"The priests," he said, "and many more. All who owe toll to the God Who Repays. All who have—no, I can't tell you. If I buy it I don't want you to be able to tell about it, and I trust you not to mention it to any one until our business is settled."

"Very well," I promised.

I put it in the window the next morning, acting on his advice. I covered the face with a thick veil. It was not supposed to be seen by vulgar eyes, he explained, and they would deal better with me if I had treated it with respect. It was a god, that took sacrifice he assured me, and he showed me that the right arm was jointed. There was a way to make it strike, he believed, but we could not find it. The dagger came down just in front of the crossed legs, where a man's neck might be if he knelt at its feet.

"If he was favored by the priests," the professor explained, "the would be told to kneel a little to one side, or perhaps to cross his hands over his neck—so. Then the dagger would only take off an ear, or a finger. The god had to have blood once he was offended, and—the less you know about it the better."

"It has just a finger left," I said.

"Is there any meaning in that?"

He looked at it thoughtfully.

"There is a proverb that 'A god has only to raise his little finger, and so, suppose, some one thought that he would make him safe—our friend, the American sailor, perhaps. Well,

the dagger in sacking before we carried him upstairs.

It seemed to have got on my nerves and I dreamed a good bit about it that night. I thought it was in a sort of temple with open sides, surrounded by sand and palms, and a lot of brown men were pushing me toward it and his veil went up and his eyes seemed to draw me, and when I got within reach they tripped me with a rope, and just as I was falling I awoke. It was beginning to get light, and there the things squatted on the table where I had put it and the veil had fallen off its face and its eyes were staring at me. I covered it up with the counterpane before I finished my sleep.

About half an hour after we had set it in the window the next morning the two foreign men came in and saluted me. I might have been looking at the image except for one difference. Their faces were flesh that looked like wood and the low face was wood that looked like flesh.

"What do you want?" I asked, and they pointed to the image and jabbered in their queer lingo and made a lot of signs and played a sort of play. One was the joss, it seemed, and the other stood for me, and if I didn't go and kneel to him and then give him to them he would kill me, or they would, I was not sure which. Anyhow I took up a dog whip—Swede brought it from Iceland—and they went.

Just as they were going the professor came in. He caught hold of

with my head on the knees of the joss, and felt a fearful blow on the back of my neck, and when I did wake I found myself out of bed and kneeling in front of him. And I had been struck there, and nothing but the sacking had saved me. The thickness of it I found when I got a light. I didn't sleep any more that night.

I had a nap after Isaac came and we had carried the joss down stairs, and I had just finished a late breakfast when the professor turned up. He had been worrying over the business, he said, and he had come to urge me to give it up."

"For nothing," I cried. "Not I; but I'll take five hundred pounds, you can tell them."

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"No," he said, "I'll stand back. You might knock something over and they'd hear. They can't see you. They'll be between you and the light—what there is. Keep quiet."

I kept quiet, shivering with excitement. It was anything else it wasn't from fear of them. I'll own that I didn't feel quite easy about the joss.

At last the fastening went back with a sharp "click." Then the window opened slowly. When I heard them in the room; and then they crept into the shop and stood just inside it, close to my elbow. The glimmer from the fanlight showed them. They saluted me the figure and spoke in that depreciating tones, and suddenly a voice came from it—well, I suppose it was the professor, but it sounded unearthly and angry. It seemed to be giving orders. When I stopped in place of the little finger—well, I judge by the feel. The professor and the two wooden faced dagoes were lifting the joss into a great basket with handles. They had lighted a lamp somewhere, and it shone upon the figure as they lifted it. It left side was toward me, and I happened to notice the left hand. The little finger was complete.

"Of course," Mr. Levy remarked when he had finished the story, "I was had carried the joss down stairs, and I had just finished a late breakfast when the professor turned up. He had been worrying over the business, he said, and he had come to urge me to give it up."

"For nothing," I cried. "Not I; but I'll take five hundred pounds, you can tell them."

"They will not pay," he said. "For one thing they would consider it an insult to the god to buy his freedom. It would be doubling his power to free himself. For another thing, they consider that you have done to him. But if you'll let it go I'll make the best terms that I can with them."

Just then the wooden faced man came in and went out in a hurry and took up a big knob kerf; the man who sold it to me said it came from the Pretoria Kafir police. But they did not run, only motioned to me to look at the joss. Then they pointed me out to him and chanted slowly. There was no one near it to touch a spring, but the arm with the dagger went slowly up, and quickly down. The two men bowed

to it with their palms together. Then they bowed to me with their palms apart as if 'You see' was what they meant. Then they went.

"Isaac," I said, "I've had enough of this. Get out the hammer and the coal hammer and we'll smash the thing up." But the professor came out from behind the curtain door.

"No, no!" he begged excitedly. "No, no, would a sin. Such wonderful wares. You may have your thousand pounds yet. Come and listen to me."

We went into the shop parlor and sat down, and what he said was this: "You'd better give it up, and I don't take it, but suppose we can get them to give it up. What then?"

"It would murder one of us," I said.

"No, no. When I had it I'd soon find the spring and make it safe. Anyhow I'll risk the idea if I can get free from his followers."

"The professor persuades them to go," I declared.

"No," he said, "but—the god might!"

"The god?" I stared at him.

"They might mistake my voice for his—laugh—dry laugh—if they broke in, as they thought of doing last night, in the dark."

"I see!" I cried, "I see! I almost danced with delight; I was younger then and not so stout. 'You'll talk to them in their lingo as if you were the joss and tell them to go off and never come back, eh?'"

"I shall tell them that I (that is, the joss, as you call it) will not come to the finger. They haven't it, or they would have been here before you put him in the window."

"Do you seriously mean to say that a wooden figure would have brought them to it? Show them the way?"

"I mean it very seriously," he said. "And if they did find his little finger at any time—well, the risk will be mine, if they go to-night, and I buy it, if they don't."

"If they don't," I said, "so much the worse for them. I'm not afraid of a couple of wooden faced brown men."

We assumed that they would make an attempt for it that night. So we did not carry it upstairs, but set it in the middle of the shop, on a low-carved chair, inlaid with ivory, that looked like a throne—as I rather think it was. The black wood brought it didn't speak English well, and I could only make out that it was something to do with a 'great ju-ju,' called Ko-ko. We put a screen behind it, and the professor sat behind this room. It was dark except for a faint glimmer from the fanlight over the shop door. The shutters were up on the door and the window. The darkness got on my nerves, and whenever the professor stirred I jumped, thinking that it was the joss moving.

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The Question Box

A. W. C.—Please state what the government's loss is annually on registered mail—such as letters, money, and the money has been taken out and the letter delivered.

A.—The government sustains no loss, since it does not assume any responsibility for it beyond the precaution of taking a receipt from each employe handling the matter. With this device it is a rare thing for money to be lost, and if an employe is a thief he is soon caught.

F. R.—What is the amount of a widow's dower in Tennessee, the husband dying intestate and there being no children?

A.—The dower rights of the widow are one-third of the real property. The remainder goes to brothers and sisters, if none, to parents; if none, to heirs; if none, to widow.

Subscriber—Where can I get a copy of the song "The American Flag," beginning "When Freedom from her mountain heights?"

A.—It appears in every collection

of patriotic verse printed, and any bookdealer can supply it.

M. B. K.—To whom can I write in England to find out if there is an estate there for me? (2) What is the horoscope of one born January 1st?

A.—If you have no recourse but to apply to the English courts, you will have to employ an attorney who in turn will engage an English member of the bar to look into the matter. If there is really an estate waiting for you to claim it, there must be some way to learn something about it without going to court, and court proceedings are useless without evidence. (2) Proud, independent, talkative, and versatile.

H. E. L.—Are there any famous generals who claimed never to have been defeated in battle?

A.—Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and the Duke of Wellington have that distinction.

G. A. B.—Does the Sphinx, the Egyptian monument, preserve its good condition in spite of the lapse of time?

A.—On the contrary it is rapidly crumbling away. The great irrigation works have radically changed the exceedingly dry climate of Egypt, which made the great longevity of monuments possible.

M. P. B.—Can you describe the formaldehyde test for milk?

A.—The milk is diluted with an equal volume of water, sulphuric acid containing a trace of ferric chloride is added so that it forms a layer beneath the milk. Under these conditions milk in the absence of formaldehyde, gives a slight green tinge at the juncture of the two liquids, while a violet ring is formed when formaldehyde is present. Sometimes the violet ring forms in half a minute after mixing, sometimes not so quickly. It is well, therefore, to let the test tubes stand a few minutes. Make the test with ample light, test the brown ring, which sometimes forms as a result of the caramelization of the sugar in the milk be mistaken for the violet ring of formaldehyde.

William—Since replying to your query weeks ago I have read the moon blindness in a horse is caused by wolf-teeth—two small surplus teeth just in front of the first upper premolars, one on each side of the lower jaw. Another authority denies this.

A. E. B.—When a theatre party is invited by one of the gentlemen to partake of a supper afterwards, who should order the supper and how far should the ladies be consulted in the selection?

A.—The host should order, but he would be scarcely generous if he did not consult the taste of others of the party. He might make out a menu and refer it to his friends before ordering. Then, if a dish were not wanted, a substitute could be supplied.

G. A. L.—What is the climate of Washington, and especially of Seattle?

A.—Seattle has a mild climate, and so has much of the State. During the winter months rain falls in large quantities, but snow is seldom seen. The Gulf stream which sweeps down the Pacific coast gives Washington and Oregon as fine a climate as can be found in America. The dampness of winter is, however, objectionable to sufferers from rheumatism and asthma.

H. F.—Is a negro eligible for election to the presidency?

A.—Any negro born in the United States who has reached the age of 35 years, if he has lived in this country fourteen years, may be elected President. It is simply a question of getting the necessary votes.

A. S. D.—When was the Burlingame treaty, and what was it negotiated?

A.—The treaty was signed July 26th, 1868, by Mr. Burlingame, who was appointed special envoy to the United States and the European powers having treaties with China. The treaty was notable because of important provisions conferred upon those nations and because for the first time China recognized the principles of international law.

J. E. R.—What is the scientific explanation of thunder claps?

A.—As commonly explained the electric discharge visible as lightning heats the air through which it passes to a very high temperature, and this causes an intensely violent expansion of the air and its vapors from end to end of the flash. This is immediately met by a contraction of equal violence and rapidity, and thus is produced a violent expansion and contraction, the causative factor of noise. The waves of thunder transmission tends to rise away from the ground and, therefore, away from audibility, because of refraction in the atmosphere and because of the irregular conductivity in storm air. This fact explains why thunder is never heard beyond fifteen or twenty miles, while the discharge of artillery has been heard a hundred miles.

B. E.—Who operates the Panama railroad?

A.—It is controlled by the United States government, but is operated independently under its own charter. H. J. Biffer