

GURDIT SINGH PLAYED GAME WITH THE GODS

(BY POLLOUGH POGUE.)

Gurdit Singh, the Singapore Sikh, who bit off more than he could chew, is in a perplexing situation. He stalks up and down the deck of the Komagata Maru, meditating on the dilemma and pulling at his grey beard. The argonauts whom he has lead to Vancouver are denouncing him and casting slurs upon him. Disaster has overtaken the voyage.

The adventurers are without money to pay for provisions and they depend on the benevolence of Vancouver Hindus for their daily chapattis. To supply the emigrants on the ship with provisions and other necessities costs \$200 a day. They are in debt about \$18,000. And they are "broke."

They are finding fault with Gurdit Singh. They each paid him \$100 in cash as passage money. This is twice the price of a third-class passage on a Canadian Pacific steamer from Hongkong. In this way Gurdit Singh raised the money to charter and provision the ship. It appears to have taken all the money he had. It was understood that he was a wealthy man, but it appears that he is a beggar. He has no money left. In embarking on this enterprise, he seems to have trusted in Providence. If the ship left port and turned her bows toward Japan her passengers would have to have a month's provisions. The Vancouver Hindus would have to pay for them.

Money-Making Chance.

Gurdit Singh, some time ago in Singapore, saw an opportunity to make some money and a reputation as a patriot at the same time. He formed a company, which consisted of himself and his trust in the special Sikh Providence. It was called the Guru Nanak Company, after one of the great Sikh gurus. Probably Gurdit hoped that Guru Nanak would give the enterprise his blessing. The company immediately began to sell tickets from Hongkong to Vancouver for \$100 a ticket. The Komagata Maru was chartered. Besides the passage money, the passengers say that Gurdit Singh took what money they had and made them shareholders in the company. At any rate they are "broke" now. The whole expedition is out at elbows.

If the Vancouver Hindus pay the \$11,000 which is due on the charter, the \$4000 which is said to be owing on the coal cargo, and the two or three thousand dollars owing to the steamer for port dues, and other expenses, and for the wireless apparatus which she will have to have before she leaves port, what security can Gurdit Singh and his emigrants give them for this considerable amount of money. And if the ship and her passengers stay in port while lawsuits drag through the courts, how long will the Vancouver Hindus continue their charity? They are providing the emigrants with supplies now. But how long will they continue to do so?

Does Not Shave.

Nathan Singh's place in the scheme of things is a very small place; he is a mere boy whose beard is just assembling on his face in mossy foilage. No good Sikh ever shaves. Nathan Singh is meek in manner, though the word Singh which every Sikh has after his name means tiger or warrior. When I asked him a question he shrank from me in fear, but I suppose he had been told to abstain from reporters.

When he appeared before the court of enquiry, he answered the questions of the sirdar, who reigned over the court, with dropped eyes, and salaams, while the other Sikhs who have been before the court have behaved as if oppression had been put upon them and have cursed the superin-

he and his brother held, and which is brother tilled in the Punjab. The lawsuit ran through several courts and took much time. Then there was a young girl in the village whom he had passed his honor to marry before he came to Canada, and so they were married. Then in the hope that God would give them a son, he waited and said many prayers and counted their beads, and in the course of events the son was born and, leaving his wife money enough to support her until he could send more, he travelled to Hongkong and took passage to Vancouver with the migrants of the Komagata. Nathan Singh intends to remain three years in British Columbia, working at his old job in the millyard and saving his money. Then he will go back to the Punjab for good. He will then have money to embark in trade for himself.

When Nathan Singh recoiled from my question I gave him to understand that no mere alien of no importance could baffle one of the lordly white race, and told him that his record of iniquity was known to me and that I could send him back on board the Komagata Maru if I so desired. He grinned and lit a cigarette. A Chinaman would have said, "No sabe," but a Sikh cannot pretend that he is not a linguist. Nathan Singh is well acquainted with the English language. His sheep's eyes were set on the Komagata Maru, with her brown awnings and her Japanese flag wreathing in the breeze.

"Do they think they'll get ashore?" I asked him.

"They never think they won't," answered Nathan Singh.

"They are sure they will."

"They are sure."

"How much did you pay?"

"I pay one hundred dollars, like the rest."

Tells of Bhagwan.

"I want you to tell me about Bhagwan Singh, you know him, don't you?"

"I know hom. At Hongkong he come aboard the ship. The temple gong rang and all the Sikhs went to the temple. Bhagwan Singh is a guru, a priest, and he spoke to the Sikhs in the temple. He said, 'You are going to Canada. You may not be welcome there. But do not come back. I say to you, Sikhs, die rather than return. It is a good country but all the white men there are dogs and liars. And if when you arrive at Vancouver certain base-born Sikhs come on board this ship, tie them with ropes and throw them into the water to drown.'"

"Whom did Bhagwan mean?"

"He meant the spies of the immigration sahibs."

"Were they thrown overboard?"

"They were not."

"Do you like Gurdit Singh?"

"I do not like him."

"Is the ship good?"

"It is not."

"What did you have to eat?"

"Some days only chapattis."

"Rotis?"

"Yes, rotis (flour cakes), a little rice, a little pulse, a little curry, sometimes pickled mangoes, Chinese bitter melon and dried fish. Sometimes onions."

He Was Deported.

Bhagwan Singh is a gentleman of a malignant disposition who was deported by the superintendent of immigration, Mr. Malcolm R. J. Reid, for sedition and other small matters. He is a guru, or teacher, and a most troublesome person. While he was in Vancouver he preached unlimited sedition and other turbulence, and spoke freely of another '57 in India. He spread treason among the Indians here, and stated pleasantly that the Russians were ready to assist the Sikhs and Mohammedans in driving the English out of India. This patriot was dealt with thoroughly one day by Mr. Malcolm Reid, and according to Nathan Singh, he had a word to say to Gurdit Singh's yachting party before they left Hongkong.

Yesterday the court of enquiry dealt with five more of the Komagata's passengers, but the decisions



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He came here from the Punjab four years ago. He was a carpenter (tarkhan) by trade, but of course he could not work at his trade in this country. So he got a job in a mill-yard.

Costly Law Suit.

After two years he went back to India, to attend to a lawsuit, which had been brought against his brother and himself by their mother's brother, who falsely claimed the land which

events the son was born and leaving his wife money enough to support her until he could send more, he travelled to Hongkong and took passage to Vancouver with the migrants of the Komagata. Nathan Singh intends to remain three years in British Columbia, working at his old job in the millyard and saving his money. Then he will go back to the Punjab for good. He will then have money to embark in trade for himself.

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Yesterday the court of enquiry dealt with five more of the Komagata's passengers, but the decisions were not favorable to them. They were accompanied ashore by Dr. Ragunath Singh, the ship's doctor, who is a surgeon of the 8th Rajpoot regiment, on leave. This is a Sikh regiment from the Punjab, stationed in Hongkong.

Touching the matter of the charter money, and the offer of a syndicate of Vancouver Hindus, Rahim Singh and others, to take over the charter and the other indebtedness, and settle the claims of the ship's owners, nothing definite has yet been done. Gurdit Singh has agreed to their terms, but the owners have not given their consent. The cable may carry their decision today.