RAMCHUNDA SINGH AND THE PURPLE PENCE

By John Walker Harrington.

Ramchunda Singh first heard of the purple pence as he was pouring yellow powder upon the simmering contents of a chafing dish. He was curry cook in Cherry's restaurant at a time when a new fad had just arrived in New York. Ramchunda Singh was sure that the fad would be short lived, and, being a Hindoo person of ready resources, he sought to find another means of livelihood. Life had not been pleasant since by strange chance Ramchunda Singh had imbibed intoxicants. He had been left stranded in New York on the day the steamer on which he was a tender of wild animals had departed for the ports of the orient. For several years Ramchunda Singh had come over the sea whenever a consignment of lions and tigers and elephants had been sent to the South street animal dealers. He tried to get Scalds to employ him, but trade was dull, and Scalds said that he preferred the Irish to the Hindoos.

So it was that Ramchunda Singh, educated Hindoo, learning of the new fad from the Sunday newspapers, had

"I HAVE ALSO A TENDER AND SUSCEPTIBLE HEART."

applied for the position of curry cook and had obtained it. He resigned on the day Mrs. Sprengle and cousin took luncheon at Cherry's.

The following morning found him at the house of William Peterson Sprengle, dealer in scrap metal and disgustingly wealthy. Ramchunda Singh had invested some of his hard earned wages in a remarkable suit consisting of a shiny Prince Albert coat, bought secondhand, and a pair of black trousers. On his head was a silk turban. He had sent a note to Mrs. Sprengle explaining that his business was urgent and concerned the welfare of her husband.

"I dine with you tonight," said Ramchunda Singh gravely.

"To what am I indebted for the honor?" said Mrs. Sprengle, who had read the etiquette books and the novels of Martha M. Day and knew what was proper under the circumstances.

"I overheard you say quite by chance," said Ramchunda Singh, "that you would give a great deal to have your husband give up theosophy, which takes too many of the purple pence and makes him neglect his family and his business."

"You are the curry cook at Cherry's!" exclaimed Mrs. Sprengle.

"Madam," rejoined Ramchunda Singh, "I am a person of high caste, a highly educated Hindoo. I shall be able to restore your husband to his senses, for I, too, was once a theosophist."

So it came to pass that on that very night Mrs. Sprengle greeted her husband with the remark that she had decided to learn something of theosophy and had engaged as teacher Mr. Ramchunda Singh, late of Delhi and Calcutta, who was an adept.

With every dinner for a week or more the peace of Ramchunda Singh was given unto the house of Sprengle. The lore of the East Indies was at the command of the guest. He talked of Vedas, and the scantily fed soul of William Peterson Sprengle was filled with joy. Ramchunda Singh and the master of the house went together to the meetings of the theosophical society. Mrs. Sprengle noticed with growing apprehension that Ramchunda Singh was dressing in elaborate style and that he had all the spending money which he seemed to require. On account of the introductions from the head of the house of Sprengle, Ramchunda Singh became the fashion. He had a lithograph of himself made, and before many days he was giving lectures at Pickering hall on abstruse subjects at $1 per head. At the home of the Sprengles he was a regular visitor. The Misses Sprengle, of whom there were two, both young and pretty, daffy and girlish, had not been admitted into the secret. Mrs. Sprengle saw that her older daughter, Agatha, was blushing whenever the swart blood Hindoo rang the doorbell and soon knew his ring. Her husband was obsessed with the wave of that

"Mary," said he one evening when Ramchunda Singh, unmindful of caste, sat at dinner with them, "perhaps you would not mind if I took a little pilgrimage to the Himalayas with our friend?"

Mrs. Sprengle started to tell what she thought of it all when a look from the Hindoo dissuaded her. She said that such a journey would no doubt be interesting. Mr. Sprengle retired to get the map of India.

"You scoundrel!" cried Mrs. Sprengle. "How dare you? You promised to cure my husband of his wretched nonsense, and you make it all the worse. How far is this going?"

"To the sum of $10,000," was the reply. "Unless that amount is forthcoming you will see your husband on his way to India with Ramchunda Singh. I have also a tender and a susceptible heart, and I should dislike for less to relinquish my claims to the affection of one whom I much admire."

Ramchunda Singh placed a fat hand on his chest and rolled his eyes upward.

Four days afterward William Peterson Sprengle came home white with rage.

"Mary," he said, "I am done with this theosophy forever! That scoundrel Ramchunda Singh has fled for parts unknown. Quite by accident he dropped a letter in my office in which he referred to me as the 'old idiot,' upon whose ignorance he was imposing. Never mention his name to me again!"

"I hate to think he was an impostor, William," replied Mrs. Sprengle, "for before he went away I gave him quite a sum of money. However, if you wish, the subject of theosophy will never again be mentioned in this house."

Over the door of an animal store in Calcutta there is today the sign "Ramchunda Singh," and within sits an affluent Hindoo, smoking his pipe and taking his ill gotten ease.

Getting an Autograph of Davis.

A Chicago girl, in looking over a book of autographs of famous people one day run across this letter:

Dear Miss X.—Your note requesting autograph is a model. Please start a school of collectors. WILLIAM GILLETTE.

Chicago, Oct. 7, 1897.

This letter immediately interested the girl and she inquired by what method her friend had secured so flattering a reply.

The owner of the letter explained that she had sent the actor a blank sheet of paper with the words, "Your autograph, please," written at the top of the sheet. This she sent with a stamped envelope for reply.

"The brevity of my note evidently pleased Mr. Gillette, for no doubt he is bored to death with many foolish notes from hundreds of matinee girls and other autograph fiends like myself," she said.

The rival collector was struck with the originality of the idea, and, thinking to repeat her friend's success in securing such a fine note, said, "I think I shall try that plan also, and then I too, shall have some clever little letters to add to my book."

That same afternoon she sent a card with this brief phrase, "Your autograph, please," to Mr. Richard Harding Davis, and within a few days she received the following dry response written on the same card beneath her short request:

You seem pressed for time. R. H. DAVIS.

—Saturday Evening Post.

"Thou Diest on Point of Fox."

Fox blades were celebrated all through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for their excellent temper and mention of them is frequent in English drama. This is their history:

There was a certain Julian del Rei believed to be a Morisco, who set up a forge at Toledo in the early part of the sixteenth century and became famous for the excellence of his sword blades, which were regarded as the best of Toledo. That city had for many ages previous been renowned for swordmaking, it being supposed that the Moors introduced the art, as they did so many good things, from the east.

Julian del Rei's mark was a little dog, which came to be taken for a fox, and so the "fox blade," or simply "fox" for any good sword. See "Henry V.," act 4, scene 4, "Thou diest on point of fox." The brand came to be imitated in other places, and there are Solingen blades of comparatively modern manufacture which still bear the little dog of Julian del Rei.—Notes and Queries.

A Wagner Find.

Autograph letters of Wagner have been discovered in use as jam pot covers. A German journalist found them at the house of two maiden ladies, sisters of a musician long since deceased, who had formerly been in intimate correspondence with the author of "Parsifal." The ladies were exhibiting to him with much pride their cupboards full of jam when the journalist saw some writing on the covers which he recognized as that of Wagner. The superior thickness of the paper, which almost resembles parchment, had supplied the reason for its application to this domestic use.

The Authority.

Bilkins—This paper says some of the greatest achievements in the photographic art have been made by amateurs. Is that so?

Amateur—Of course. If you don't believe it, ask any—

"Photographer?"

"Amateur."

Misinformed.

Singleton—I am told that you cursed the day you were married.

Wedderly—No; it wasn't quite that bad. I didn't curse until the day after.—Chicago News.

THE HABIT OF GIVING.

Governor E. D. Morgan's First Taste of Real Happiness.

To the present generation the name of Governor E. D. Morgan of New York is scarcely more than a dim echo from the pages of history, but there are men still living who remember him as one of the group of great war governors whose firmness and courage served their country so magnificently in her darkest hour. It was one who so remembered him who told this incident:

Governor Morgan was a very rich man, but until he was seventy years old he never had given away any of his wealth. Then one day he sent for his old friend, Dr. Adams, the president of Union Theological seminary, and told him that he wished to give a large sum of money to the college. The doctor, almost incredulous at first, was soon convinced of the sincerity of the offer, and a time was set at which he was to go and get the bonds.

At the appointed hour the doctor appeared, and bonds to the value of more than $200,000 were put into his hands. The governor stood and watched until the doctor's carriage was out of sight. Afterward he spoke of it to another friend.

"I am an old man," he said. "I have had a successful life and done about all that I had planned to do, and I supposed that I had been happy. But I know now that until I stood and watched Dr. Adams drive away with those bonds I never had known what happiness was. I cannot regret too deeply that early in life I did not form the habit of giving."—Youth's Companion.

The Wills of Noah and Jacob.

The origin of testaments is lost in obscurity, but doubtless they followed soon after the first institution of private property. Eusebius says that Noah made a will soon after the flood wherein he disposed of the whole world. He was certainly possessed of a considerable landed estate, but Eusebius' story of the testament in writing and witnessed under his seal needs confirmation.

In the forty-eighth chapter of Genesis, however, we do find mention of a will, wherein Jacob bequeathed to his son Joseph twice as much as to his other children. This was not a testament in writing, but a verbal or nuncupative testament, declared by the testator "in extremis" before witnesses and depending upon oral testimony.

Such nuncupative testaments were at one time recognized in English law, but in the eighteenth century, Blackstone says, they had fallen into disuse and were hardly ever heard of.

Weighing Machines.

Weighing machines and scales of some kind were in use 1800 B. C., for it is said that Abraham at that time "weighed out" 400 shekels of silver, current money, with the merchant to Ephron, the Hittite, as payment for a piece of land, including the cave and all the standing timber "in the field and in the fence." This is said to be the earliest transfer of land of which any record survives and that the payment was made in the presence of witnesses.

The original form of the weighing scale was probably a bar suspended from the middle, with a board or shell suspended from each end, one to contain the weight, the other to contain the matter to be weighed. The steelyard was probably so called from the material of which it was made and from its former length. It is also known as the Roman balance and is of great antiquity.

Cunning Siberian Natives.

When compelled to travel all night, the Siberian natives always make a practice of stopping just before sunrise and allowing their dogs to go to sleep. They argue that if the dog goes to sleep while it is yet dark and wakes up in an hour and finds the sun shining he will suppose that he has had a full night's rest and will travel all day without thinking of being tired. One or even two hours' stop at any other time is perfectly useless, as the dogs will be uncontrollable from that time forward until they are permitted to take what they think a full allowance of sleep.

Policemen In the Blood.

A writer in Knowledge thus denominates certain wandering cells found in the healthy human body which destroy harmful microbes introduced into the system. "The tonsils, for example, are crowded with these guardian cells." The scene under the microscope when protective cells are introduced into a lively culture of typhoid bacilli is described as very striking, irresistibly bringing before the imagination "the fierce struggle which goes on when disease germs invade the body."

Neither Better Than the Other.

"This dollar"— began the cashier of the restaurant as he scrutinized the coin.

"Is bad, eh?" interrupted the sour looking patron.

"Well, it doesn't look very good."

"That so? Just bite it, and if it's anything like the dinner I had it'll taste even worse than it looks."—Catholic Standard and Times.

A Dilemma.

Edith—Forgive me, Bertha, but your husband plays the flute atrociously.

Bertha—I know, dear, but what can I do? He used to serenade me with that flute. If I tell him now that he is no player, he will think my love is growing cold.—Boston Transcript.

As Represented.

Mrs. Boaster—Henry and I attended the opera last night. We had a box.

Mrs. Blount—Caramels, weren't they? I saw you in the gallery eating something.—Richmond Dispatch.

LOVE'S SACRIFICE.

An Engagement Ring Which Amputates a Finger Joint.

Ethnological experts agree that with most Australian tribes every woman is betrothed in infancy or even in anticipation of her birth. According to some mysterious law of their own, this is arranged by the old men of the family, the women having no voice in the matter. The age of the proposed husband is not taken into consideration, so that it frequently happens that by the time the girl is of a marriageable age her intended is an old man. If in the meantime some younger man has set his heart upon her, this means a fight, in which the unfortunate bride to be, as she is dragged away, is certain to come in for a share of the blows which the rival suitors deal out to each other.

In some of the coast districts, where not all the girls are promised in infancy, the betrothal of a young woman to a man who follows the occupation of a fisherman compels her to lose the first joint of the little finger of her left hand. This slow and painful operation is performed by a stout string bound tightly about the joint—an engagement ring with which one would willingly dispense! A marriage license, equally unique, is common in some sections, where the chief gives to the prospective groom a peculiarly knotted string, possessing which he is free to seek the wife of his choice.—Woman's Home Companion.

How Muskrats Are Trapped.

Trapping is one of the modes by which muskrats are secured. The traps are made of boards about six inches wide and three feet long. These are nailed together like an ordinary box trap, the open ends being secured by swinging doors of wire network, fastened to the upper part of both entrances. These doors allow easy ingress to the trap, but once in the rat cannot get out without opening the door by pulling it to him, which secret they seem very slow to discover. These traps are put in the leads running from the houses to the water when the tide is at low ebb and the rats are out feeding. On the return they crawl up the leads, push against one of the wire doors of the trap, which immediately opens into the trap, but they cannot go farther, as the next door opens toward them. Before they can gnaw out the tide makes up, and they are drowned in the trap.

A Story Told by Disraeli.

Disraeli once said: "You know I have the honor of being one of the elder brethren of the Trinity House. Well, there is a special uniform belonging to the office. One day I was about to attend a levee at St. James' palace, and my valet laid out my diplomatic uniform ready for me to put on. Placing implicit confidence in him, I put it on and went to the levee. On appearing before the prince his royal highness jocularly remarked: 'It won't do. You're found out.' 'In what, sir?' I inquired. 'Oh,' said the prince, 'you've got the wrong trousers on.' And to my horror, on looking down I found that I had got my diplomatic uniform coat on with the Trinity House trousers. It seemed to amuse the prince immensely."

The Oldest Epitaph.

The oldest epitaph in English, which is found in a churchyard in Oxfordshire and dates from the year 1370, to modern readers would be unintelligible not only from its antique typography, but from its obsolete language, the first two lines of which run as follows and may be taken as a sample of the whole:

"Man com & se how schal alle dede be: wen yow comes bad & bare: noth hav ven we away fare: all ye werines yt ve for care."

The modern reading would be: "Man, come and see how shall all dead be when you come poor and bare; nothing have when we away fare. All is weariness that we for care."

Ears.

If your ears burn, people say, some one is talking about you. This is very old, for Pliny says, "When our ears do glow and tingle, some do talk of us in our absence."

Shakespeare, in "Much Ado About Nothing," makes Beatrice say to Ursula and Hero, who had been talking of her, "What fire is in mine ears!"

Sir Thomas Browne ascribes this conceit to the superstition of guardian angels, who touch the right ear if the talk is favorable and the left if otherwise. This is done to cheer or warn.

One ear tingles, some there be
That are snarling now at me.

Before Mirrors.

Mrs. Snaggs—I read a paragraph in the paper which said, "Woman was made before mirrors, but it wasn't her fault." Don't you think that is a mean remark to make about woman?

Mr. Snaggs—Yes, I think it is. What the writer meant to say was that woman was made before mirrors and had been before them ever since.—Exchange.

Needed No Help.

Mrs. Hiram Offen—And do you think you could do the cooking for the family with a little help from me?

Applicant—No, ma'am, Oi do not.

Mrs. Hiram Offen—You don't?

Applicant—No, ma'am, but Oi'm sure Oi cud do it widout anny help from you.—Philadelphia Press.

No Cause For Alarm.

Nervous Passenger (on New Haven steamer)—There's a very peculiar noise in the water tonight. Do you notice it, captain?

Captain—Yes, madam; that's the regular Long Island sound.—Harlem Life.

The man who hesitates may be lost, but the man who never hesitates is hard to find.—Chicago News.

The Old Gray Mare

By GEO. M. GILLINGS.

Farmer John Carter had fed the pigs, shut the henhouse door and come around on to the side veranda to smoke his evening pipe with his wife, Nancy, who sat in the big rocking chair. She had placed his pipe and tobacco within easy reach. Farmer John sat down with a grunt, rubbed at his stiff knee a minute, and then, instead of filling his pipe, he slowly turned to his wife and said:

"Nancy, I want to know what's wrong with our Milly."

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed the wife and ceased rocking so suddenly that she almost shot out of the chair.

"Don't try to fool me," he continued as he slowly shook his head. "I ain't been askin' no questions before, but I seen for two or three weeks that things was wrong with Milly."

"She's been kind o' draggy since she got wet goin' to camp meetin', but I don't think we ought to have a doctor, do you?"

"I think, Nancy," he slowly replied after a half minute— "I think I'm goin' to find out what's the matter with Milly, and if you won't tell me I'll go over and have a few words with Sile Johnson. Mebbe he knows."

"How should he know?" asked Nancy as she rocked furiously.

"Dunno, but I guess I'll walk over there tonight."

"Well, I guess you won't. John Carter, why can't you mind your own business?"

"Dunno, but I want to see Sile Johnson."

"You are always pokin' around and makin' an old hen buzzy of yourself, and I expect you'll get up and put on one of my dresses some mornin'. Now then, bein' you are so full of curiosity lemme tell you somethin'. Our Milly and Sile have had a tiff."

"Had a row, eh?" queried John, as he settled himself down to hear the particulars.

"No, sir, they haven't!" she snapped "I said a tiff, and there's a heap of difference between a tiff and a row."

"But they got mad at each other?"

"Yes, they did, and I'm backin' Milly for all I'm worth. You know the day she went over to Eli Warner's to see Sarah? Well, there was a windmill man at Warner's that day, and because the two girls sung the 'Sweet By and By' while he played on the organ Silas called Milly a flirt."

"And she got mad?"

"Of course."

"And he got mad?"

"Of course."

"And he hasn't been here for two weeks, and Milly is goin' around lookin' as if she wanted to die? I must go over and see Sile and tell him she's all over bein' mad and wants to be friends ag'in."

"What! What! John Carter, are you a born fool?" almost shouted Nan

HE GRASPED THE SITUATION AT A GLANCE.

cy, as she rose from her chair. "Don't you dare stir one single step! You'd make a pretty muss of things if they was left to you, wouldn't you?"

"But something has got to be done," he protested with anxious voice. "Milly and Sile have been lovin' each other over two years, and we mustn't let 'em fall out over a little thing like that."

"What's got to be done, for one thing, is for you to keep out of it. Milly has got a mother, and that mother sits right here, and what she don't know about lovers' quarrels you needn't try to learn her. Now, you mind what I tell you. I'm expectin' Sile Johnson will come sneakin' around any day, but if he does don't you say one word about the quarrel. Jest treat him as if you didn't know anything had happened. He begun the quarrel, and he's got to be the one to eat humble pie."

"But suppose he sticks out about it and busts up the marriage?"

"I shan't suppose nothin' of the sort. If he doesn't fall off the barn and break his neck, he'll be back here and very humble within two weeks."

Mrs. Nancy Carter thought she knew young Silas Johnson pretty well and that he didn't differ much from the generality of lovers, but she was mistaken. He was an obstinate young man, and, though it caused him loss of sleep and appetite, he refused to be the first to give in. One word from Milly would have brought him over to the Carter farmhouse on the jump, but, backed by a feeling of injury and her mother, she refused to speak it. It thus came about that the "tiff" threatened to have disastrous consequences, and there was a possibility of two lives being wrecked. One evening when she was forced to realize this Nancy quietly asked of her husband:

"John, did you see Silas anywhere around when you was passin' the farm the other day?"

"Yes," was the reply. "He was buildin' a fence jest beyond the barn. Is it all off between Milly and him?"

"Can't say whether 'tis or not. Did you ever know our old gray mare to run away?"

"Lands, no! Nothin' on earth would scare her."

"But if somethin' did, John? If Milly was drivin' her to town and she ran away, what would happen?"

"She'd probably stop for breath after goin' about five rods," laughed the husband.

"She wouldn't kick the wagon to pieces or kill Milly?"

"She might fetch up in a fence corner and bump her own head, but I guess that would be the worst of it. What's up, Nancy?"

"Nothin' for you to know. You jest keep quiet and lemme work this thing out by myself. Milly's goin' to town after a darnin' needle and a spool of black thread after dinner tomorrer, and she'll drive the old mare."

After dinner next day the horse was hitched to a light wagon and left standing under a shed in the barnyard until wanted. When Milly was ready for her trip, the mother brought the outfit around, taking much more time than seemed necessary. Moreover, when the old mare, who had passed her twentieth birthday, was brought up at the gate she was what Milly called "wriggly"—that is, she was nervous and restless and evidently full of go. She had to be held by the bit until the girl got in and secured the lines.

"She acts real colty today," said the mother as she patted the mare's nose, "but she'll steady down before you get to the schoolhouse. She has never run away in her life, but if she should do so now"—

"I guess I won't go," interrupted Milly.

"You go right along. As I was sayin', if she should run away you hold her steady in the middle of the road and scream for help. Now let her g'lang."

The old gray mare moved off with a rush, and for a quarter of a mile she maintained a pace to surprise her driver. Then she suddenly gave a squeal and broke into a run. Milly dropped the lines and clung to the seat, and she also remembered her mother's injunction to scream. Silas Johnson was still working on the fence "jest beyond the barn." He was also calling himself a fool and thinking he would give five years of his life to make up with Milly when he heard screams and a clatter down the road. He grasped the situation at a glance.

It is none of the reader's affair whether he resolved to do or die, whether he made a hero of himself or not, whether the "wriggly" old mare was glad of an excuse to stop or made frantic efforts to continue her wild flight. It is sufficient that he stopped her, that the screaming Milly fell into his arms, that after a time he drove her back home and didn't return to his fence building again that day.

The main point of interest shifts to that side veranda again. Nancy is sitting there alone with a smile of triumph on her face when John comes up from the barn and holds up to view a dozen burs and innocently says:

"Nancy, this is mighty curious. I found all these burs under the harness, and they must have been what made the old mare run away."

"Very likely," she replies without looking up.

"And somebody must have put 'em there."

"Yes."

"And—and—it—was"—

"Silas says he thinks they ought to be married next month," says Nancy as she looks up and almost winks at the puzzled face above her.

Equal to Three.

Public vehicles in Paris are allowed to carry only as many passengers as can find seats. After that number has been admitted no one is allowed to enter. The explanation will serve to introduce an incident reported by a correspondent of the Pittsburg Dispatch.

A crowd of men and women, each with a numbered ticket showing the order in which they were to enter the next street car, stood at the Place de l'Etoile station when the downtown car arrived.

Surveying the crowd, the conductor cried out: "Only three places in the car! Who has ticket No. 1?"

With that Mrs. Blank of Chicago, the stoutest woman in the American colony, approached, holding up the ticket called for.

"Step aboard, madam," said the conductor, ringing his go ahead bell.

"Wait! Wait! I've No. 2!" called a little Frenchman.

"You're too late," replied the conductor. "Every place is taken."

Immune.

Mrs. Tompkins—Do you think your son's life is blighted by that cruel girl?

Mrs. Simpson—Oh, no. Archibald is too much infatuated with himself to be seriously injured by any external love affair.—Detroit Free Press.

An Acceptable Neighbor.

Bizzer—How does your wife like that lady who moved in next door?

Buzzer—Oh, all right. She hasn't as many gowns as my wife.—Columbus (O.) State Journal.