

V. 3
THE ROUNDABOUT BOOKS

OUR BOYS
IN INDIA

Henry BY *Alford*
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"OUR BOYS IN CHINA"

"OUR BOYS IN IRELAND"

ETC. ETC.

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CHAPTER IX.

AN ELEPHANT FIGHT AND A MOUNTAIN RIDE.



WHEN they reached their bungalow again, which was not till two o'clock in the morning, Scott showed the ivory portrait to Mr. Raymond.

"There is a souvenir indeed!" he exclaimed. "It could not be bought for five hundred dollars. In fact, it could not be bought at all. It is one of the relics of India's palmy days, under the glorious reign of the great Moguls."

"She's an odd stick, according to this picture," said Scott; "but what in the world is that that she has got beside her? Is it a snake?"

"It's only a *hookah*," said Richard.

"A *hookah*! To smoke? Great Cæsar's ghost! Why, it's a regular hose-pipe. I don't wonder she got a jaw like that, puffing away on such a thing. What awful bellows she must have had to work it!

"By the way," he continued a moment later, "what were those things they had to hold their tea in?"

"I do not know," replied Richard. "I was never in a harem."

"Never?" asked Scott in surprise. Had it been a few years later, Richard would doubtless have replied, "Well, hardly ever;" but, as it was, he stuck to his first proposition.

“No, never! nor has any other European man, or native either, as for that, except in his own. You have done a wonderful thing; and you will not find one in a hundred, who knows any thing about India, who will believe you when you tell him. However, I would be very careful, and not speak of it till after you are out of India, as it might bring reproach on the kindness of our friend.”

The next thing was the arena; and, preparing themselves for the day as soon as breakfast was over, they started for the palace, where a large throng was already collected. The nobles were gathered upon a balcony, where mats were laid for those who wished them, and arm-chairs for the Europeans, of whom there were nearly a score. Opposite them there was a raised platform, where those of the populace who could gain admission were permitted to sit; and the roofs and windows and trees in every direction were crowded.

Horsemen of the royal body-guard were about the gate as they entered, proudly displaying their horsemanship, which was, indeed, something well worth seeing.

In the arena, which was an enormous square, two large male elephants were fastened by heavy chains, far apart from each other; and outside, on a low hill, three female elephants were standing, where they could overlook the entertainment.

“Elephants are something like men,” the king said to Scott, as they seated themselves. “They always show off their best prowess when the ladies are looking on.”

Indeed, the male elephants seemed fully to appreciate the occasion, and were furiously dashing about in their chains, eager to test their strength.

“What makes them so much more excited than other elephants?” asked Scott.

“They have been fed on butter and sugar and rice and spices for the last three months,” replied the king, “to make them what we call ‘musti,’ or vicious.”

All around the high stone wall that fenced in the enclosure, there were little doors about as high as a man, and as broad as a man. Mr. Raymond explained that these were for the natives to dodge into, and escape the furious elephants when they went into the arena, and were chased by them.

“I could do that myself,” said Scott. But when he saw the struggle begin, and the lightning rapidity with which those huge animals would turn about, face any one who annoyed them, and charge across the field, he made up his mind that he would rather be excused.

The time came at last, and two men approached the two angry elephants.

Scott started to his feet. They were going very near. He thought they must surely be killed.

“There is no harm,” said the king, who had taken a seat beside Scott. “They are the keepers. The elephants know them, and are never so angry that they will injure them.”

It was a fact; for the fellows went deliberately up to the animals, and even made them take them on their trunks, and lift them to their heads.

“They’re going to have the front seats in this show,” Scott observed to Mr. Raymond, as other natives came in, and loosed the irons and chains about their legs; but, a moment after, he forgot about talking altogether.

The two animals started for each other the moment they found they were free. There was only a shrieking whistle from each as a signal, and they came together. The two

great heads struck with a fearful blow; and the tusks, that were cut short that they might not injure each other, clattered and rang with the rapid strokes that only lasted for an instant, and then all was still.

The keepers had been obliged to cling for life to prevent themselves from being thrown off in the first blow; and the enormous bodies of the elephants had been lifted till their fore-feet were swinging in the air, as, with all their mighty strength, they pushed against each other with their hind-feet.

The moment they were still they began twisting their great trunks round each other; but that was the only motion, as each keeper urged his elephant on, and each animal laid every jot of power that he possessed into the muscles of those hind-legs.

Scott was trembling with excitement. The king even became so interested in the struggle, that he got up, and leaned against a pillar of the balcony.

“Look!” said Richard. “That fellow at the left is giving way.”

“Why, he is pushing the other backward!” replied Scott excitedly.

“Yes; but he’ll turn. See!” And sure enough, having made that desperate effort, and thrown the other from his balance, he turned suddenly, and ran toward the stable-door.

“What made him do that, when he was getting the best of it? He’s a regular blockhead,” said Scott scornfully.

“That was the last jump,” replied Richard. “He saw that his strength was giving way. He did not stop to think that his opponent had been weakened by modern improvements, and had lost the sharp points to his tusks; but instinct told him, that, if he turned and ran, the other fellow would

stab him in the side, and that, if he stood there much longer, he would be doubled over backward. So, when he found that he had got to go, he gave the other fellow a push that made him lose his balance; and, while he was settling on his feet again, he escaped."

Irons were put on to the vanquished elephant's feet, and he was led away. He did not make much objection. He seemed to feel ashamed of himself. The other fellow swelled up his sides with pride, swung his trunk in the air, looked up at the female elephants on the hill, and then looked around him for new worlds to conquer.

He did not have to wait long; for a dozen natives, naked to the waist, with shaven heads and very small turbans and the most meagre of breeches, ran into the arena. They were stalwart, finely-formed fellows.

"They are dressed rather thin: I envy them," said Scott, as he wiped the perspiration of excitement from his forehead.

"That is so that the elephants will have nothing to take hold of," replied the king.

"Why, what are they going to do?" asked Scott.

"Those fellows with lances are going to have a sham fight with him; and the men with poles have fuses in the end, which they set off in the elephant's face, in case of accident, to frighten him, and prevent him from doing any hurt."

"Is no one ever killed?" asked Scott.

"I never saw one killed," replied the king; "though my English friends tell me it is reported in their country that deaths are very frequent."

Now the fellows with the lances began a tirade upon the elephant; and, as the sharp points stuck into him, he would whirl one way, and then another, after the men, who would

fly from him, while others on the other side attacked him. But at last he seemed to hit upon one who had either worried him more than the rest, or who had something peculiar about him by which he could identify him. Then he made for him; and the poor fellow had to use his legs with might and main to escape him. Sometimes the chase was so close, that the elephant could not stop himself, and would bang his head into the wall over one of the doors, that was too small for him to go through.

This seemed to be the thing that was sought for by the men in the arena; for the crowd considered it the very best of jokes, and applauded vehemently.

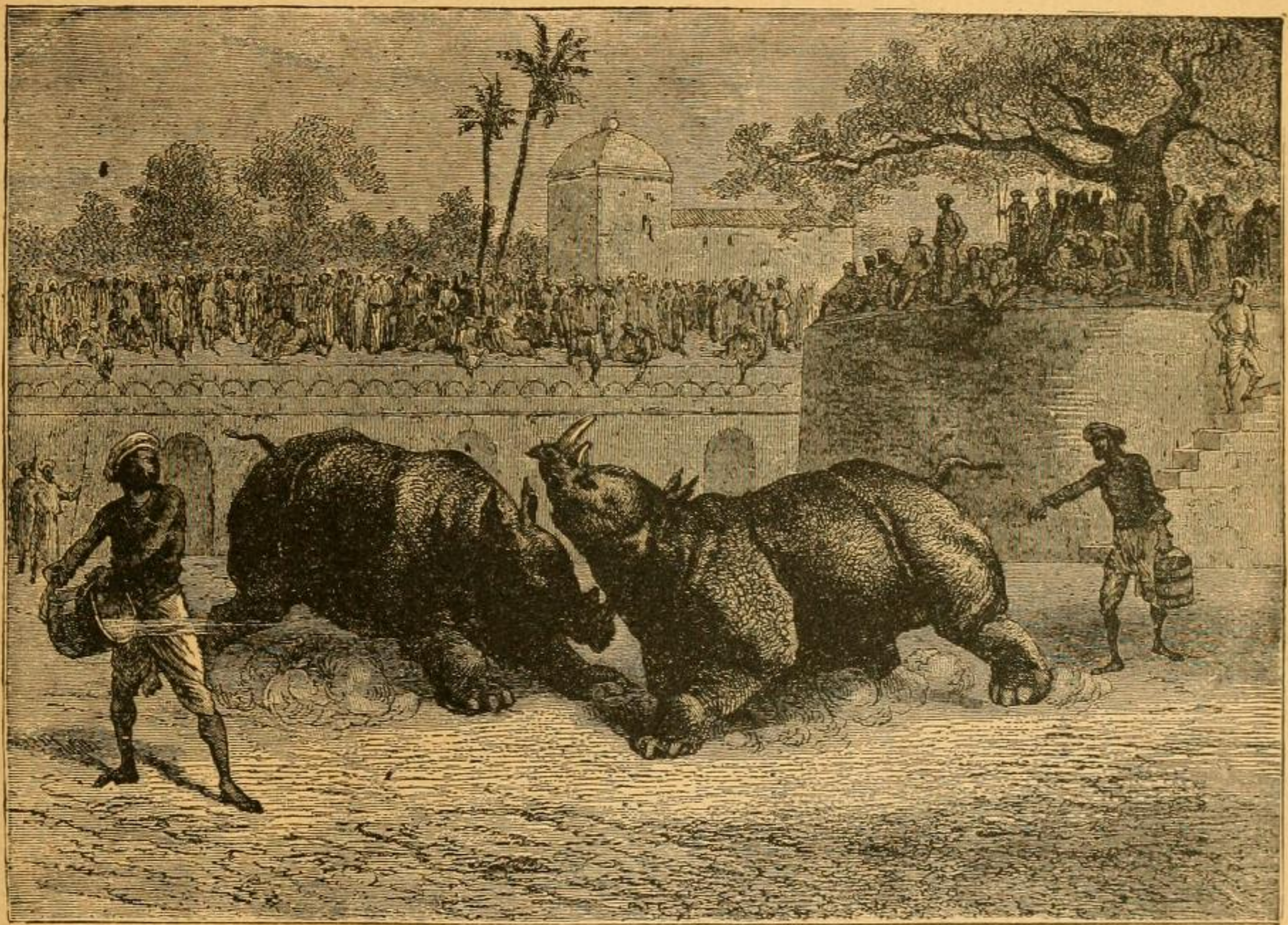
Then a horseman came in. His horse was a very graceful creature, until he turned round; but his tail was not only cut off very short, but clipped beside, so that the elephant could not take hold of it.

Scott thought this performance the most interesting part of all; and the least interesting, that part upon which most stress was laid as the great occasion of the day,—the rhinoceros-fight, when two of those clumsy animals were driven into the arena from opposite sides.

They no sooner saw each other (or heard each other, for they can only see a very short distance) than they began a lumbering trot, intent upon meeting. This trot grew faster, till in the centre they were going almost as fast as the elephants. But they had not aimed exactly right, and were too clumsy to turn. The result was, that they shot past each other, and brought up at opposite sides of the arena.

A shout went up from the spectators. The king and his guests roared with laughter; and the animals roared with passion, as they turned and again charged, only to miss as before.

This time they were not going so fast, however, and the third time brought them together. Then they fought furiously with their horns, almost as though educated fencers, till one made a lucky stroke, and fixed his horn under the other's throat, — their only vulnerable point, — that instinct told him was the place to make the attack. The other, by instinct, parried this blow by twisting his head suddenly, so as to bring



RHINOCEROS FIGHT.

the horn against his jaw, instead of his throat, where it could do no harm.

“That last elephant out was the Executioner,” said the king to Mr. Raymond a little later, while they were eating an elaborate lunch upon the balcony. “Did you recognize him?”

“I did, your highness,” replied Richard; “and, with your

permission, I would like to take my friend to the stable to see him before we go."

"I will go with you," replied the king; and, in a few minutes, he rose and led the way. He walked about the great stables, talking with the men he met there exactly as though he were one of them. He would take Scott by the arm, and lead him here and there to obtain the best views of the fettered animals. He had a menagerie that would have excelled all the circus combinations of America; and many times, as they were talking and laughing, Scott stopped suddenly, and looked up into his face. Could it be that he was one of those horrible heathen kings that were painted in "Arabian Nights" tales, even in some very modern and professedly very accurate literature!

"Why do you call him the Executioner?" he asked, as they passed the cages, and approached the enormous elephant.

"Why, because, years and years ago, when our good friend Mr. Raymond and I were little fellows, they used to have a way of executing prisoners that was so severe, that, as soon as we began to pick up bright ideas from the foreigners, we abolished it. They made this old elephant the executioner, and he enjoyed his work hugely."

"How in the world did you make him executioner?" asked Scott.

"Mr. Raymond saw one of the last executions that took place," replied the king. "It was then that I met him for the first time. He is more than half responsible for its being abolished, and for my being here to-day. He will tell you about it."

"Why is he called the Executioner, Mr. Raymond?" Scott

asked abruptly, coming up to Mr. Raymond when the king left him. Mr. Raymond started. He was evidently thinking deeply of something past. But in a moment he replied, —

“When a man was convicted, they used to tie him to this elephant’s heels, and let him be dragged through the public streets; and, if that did not kill him, after a certain time they laid his head upon a block, and the elephant went deliberately up, and put his fore-foot on it, resting all his weight possible on that foot.”

Scott looked up at that towering beast, so much larger than any he had ever seen, and shuddered, as he thought of what those huge feet had done.

But the thought of the other questions that he had to ask drew Scott from the fearful sight; and he said, —

“Will you please tell me, Mr. Raymond, — the king told me to ask you, and said you would, — how it was that you put a stop to that style of punishment, and are responsible for his being the king to-day?”

Richard turned clear about, and looked him in the eye for a moment. Then, with a light laugh, he muttered, “Stuff! You must not believe, Scott, all that these complimentary Orientals have to say.”

They remained but a day longer at Baroda.

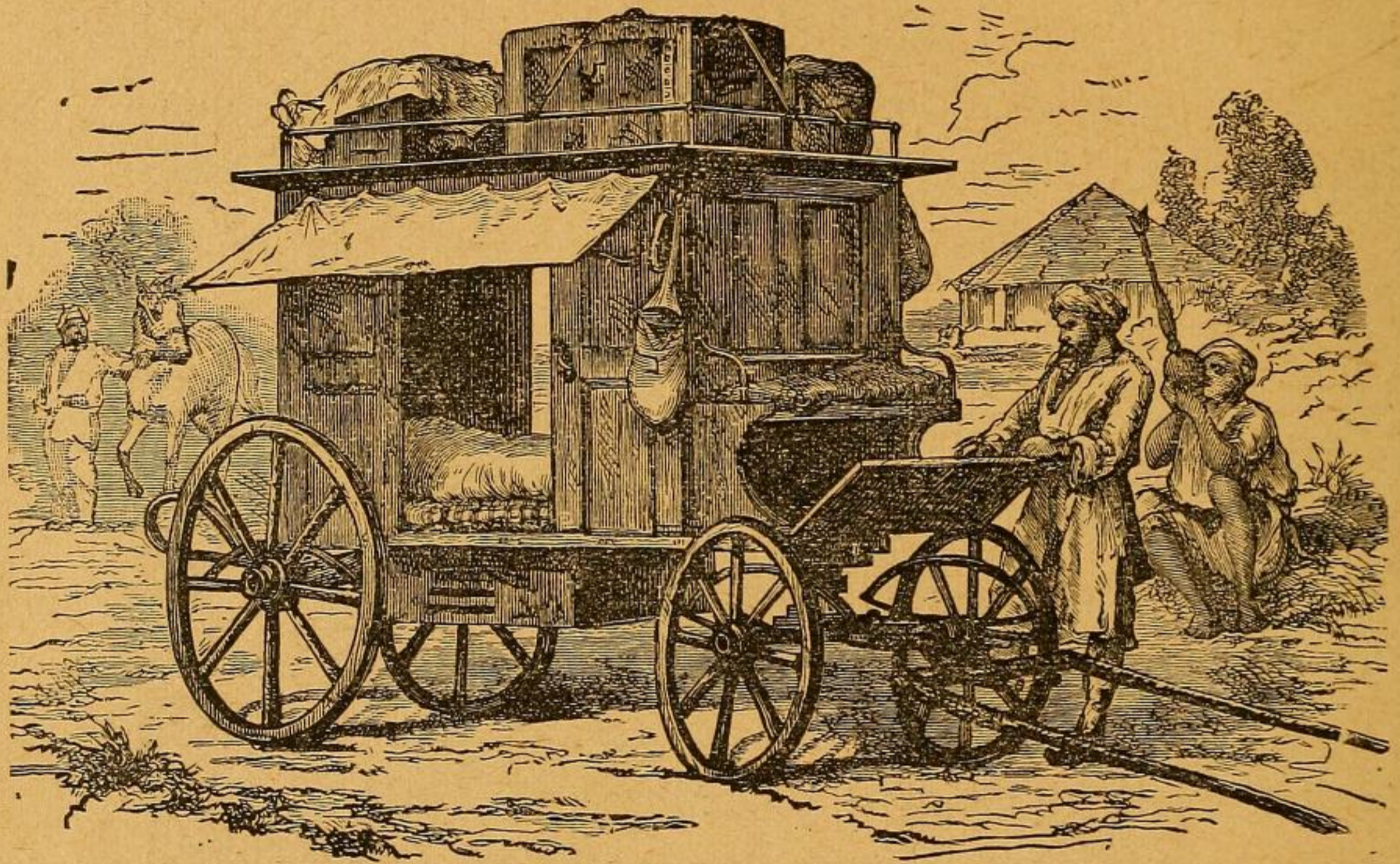
“I am in haste to be off,” said Mr. Raymond, “for we must have important news at Allahabad soon. It will hardly take us longer to go by *garri* to Burhampur; and by that means you can have a taste of very different travel, and see the first of the famous marble banks of the Narbada River. We cut off two long sides of a triangle in not going back again to Bombay, as we should have to, to go by rail.”

Scott did not see the *garri* till all was ready for the

start. It came the night before, and was made ready before he was up in the morning.

“What a wagon!” was his first exclamation.

“It is the regular *dak garri*, or post-chaise,” replied Richard, laughing. “I intended hiring one of our own; but,



THE DAK GARRI.

finding that the regular weekly post left this morning, which would secure us a much surer lot of fresh horses and a certain progress, I thought we would take it.”

“So we are going to carry the mail, are we? And what’s that bed in there for?”

“To sleep on at night,” replied Richard.

“At night? What will the hotel-keepers say?”

“In two hours we shall be beyond where they know so much as the name. You’ll see no more comforts, my boy, till you strike the railroad again.”

“Jew-pe-ter!” said Scott. “That’s not so bad. But I