

THE
RIFLE VOLUNTEERS

"RIFLEMEN! RIFLEMEN! RIFLEMEN FORM!"

AN APROPOS SKETCH

BY

EDWARD STIRLING

AUTHOR OF

*Martin Chuzzlewit—The Rubber of Life—Woman's the Devil
—Bachelor's Buttons — The Queen of Cyprus—The
Rose of Corbeil—Blue Jackets—Yankee Notes
for English Circulation—Margaret Catch-
pole—The Pickwick Club—Aline—
A Lucky Hit—Jew's Daughter—
A Pair of Pigeons,
&c.&c.&c.*



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND,
(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market
LONDON.

THE RIFLE VOLUNTEERS. CHARACTERS.

Adelphi, June 13,
1859.

Mr. John Lawrence, *a Merchant*
Mr. Somerton, *a Clerk*
Miss Kate Lawrence
Jane Twifles, *her Maid*

Mr. CHARLES SELBY.
Mr. MORELAND.
Miss WOOLGAR.
Miss KATE KELLY.

Lucy Snuffles.
Miss Kate Wilson
Cousin James
Mr. Somerton
Mr. Wilson

Surrey,
June 17, 1859.

Miss CUTHBERT.
Mrs. C. CALVERT.
Mr. STRETTON.
Mr. W. VERNON.
Mr. VOLLAIRE.

Standard,
June 13, 1859.

Mr. Wilson, *a Merchant of Weymouth*
Mr. Somerton, *a Clerk*
Sergeant Simms
Cousin James, *of the Militia*
Sergeant Wharton
Corporal Edwards
Mr. LARCHER.

LADIES OF WEYMOUTH, AFTERWARDS FORMING A TROOP OF SHARPSHOOTERS.

Bella Howard
Mary Sampson
Susan Jackson
Polly Wharton
Margaret Highfly
Jane Lewis
Charlotte Morgan
Betsey Howell
Katharine Wilson
Mary Hains
Elizabeth Flounce
Isabella Marlow
Kate Wilson, *with the song of*
"Riflemen, Riflemen, Forth"
Lucy Snuffles, *her Maid*
Miss SILVESTER.
Miss FORDE.
Miss CURTIS.
Miss LUCAS.
Miss SMITH.
Miss LOCK.
Miss HAYWARD.
Miss ROSE.
Miss WILSON.
Miss DAWSON.
Miss BARROW.
Miss STOCK.
Miss DOWNING
Miss TERRY.

COSTUMES.

MR. JOHN LAWRENCE.—Chintz dressing gown, nankeen breeches and ailers, grey wig.
SOMERTON.—Black frock and trousers, light waistcoat.

KATE.—White morning wrapper. *2nd dress*.—Grey suit, green cuffs and collars, black belt, wide awake, black hat, and green feather.

JANE.—Blue and white cotton. *2nd dress*.—Grey coat, and bearskin cap.
VOLUNTEERS.—Grey and green uniforms.

RIFLE VOLUNTEERS.

SCENE.—*A set Garden, with wall and centre gates—house, before which is a table with breakfast—garden chairs.*

MR. JOHN LAWRENCE *discovered standing at table, L., with paper—JANE attending.*

JOHN. (*reading*) "Seat of War," hand me a chair, Jane. (*JANE does so—sitting*) "The enemy crossed the Ticino, on the 16th, in great force, occupying the—"

JANE. Muffins sir ? (*handing plate*) They're nearly cold.

JOHN. Presently. (*reads*) "Heavy floods—bridge blown up—rapid retreats." Ah ! these electric telegraphs perform wonders for us in these days. Well, I hope the right may win—justice always before oppression; it is, and ever will remain my motto, without entering into politics—there's nothing like it. These hot-headed foreigners are always getting themselves into—

JANE. (*with kettle, L.*) Hot water, sir.

JOHN. (*laughs*) Come, that's not bad, Jane; you've expressed my opinion to a T.

JANE. I meant it for the tea, sir—it's weak. (*bugle heard, L.*)

JOHN. What's that?

JANE. Soldiers, sir, come down from London, by the train. Miss Kate says they're to fight for the lion and unicorn, if wanted.

JOHN. What does she know about it, pray ?

JANE. A great deal, sir—she reads the news, so do I—and my first cousin's in the militia, beats the big drum.

JOHN. You admire red coats, of course then ?

JANE. I adores 'em, 'specially sergeants and corporals.

JOHN. Like all the silly women, they think soldiers—

JANE. Sugar, sir ? (*hands basin*)

JOHN. (*laughing*) Ha, ha! capital! (*rising from table—comes down, R.*)

JANE. If you please, sir, my next holiday out, you won't be angry if I go to hear the band play—my cousin's great on the drum, and when he twists the drum sticks in the air—oh, la!

JOHN. Go, with all my heart, Jane.

JANE. Thank you, sir. (*aside*) Won't it be a treat!

Exit into house, with tray, R.

JOHN. Our heads are all turned more or less with this military fever. Our quiet town is turned upside down with it. Ah, wars like inoculation, it rapidly extends. Heaven keep us out of it, say I—peace and commerce are the natural bulwarks of Britain—not that we ever objected to a taste of war when forced on us—the blood of the old Sea Kings flows in our veins clear and strong as ever.

Re-enter JANE, from house, R.

JANE. Mr. Somerton wishes to speak to you on private business, if you can see him, sir.

JOHN. Show Mr. Somerton here immediately

JANE. Yes, sir. (*aside*) I know what he wants. (*sighs*) Poor thing !

Exit, R.

JOHN. A very respectable, painstaking young man that—one of the best I ever had in my employ—first rate accountant—no blots or blunders in his sum totals.

Re-enter JANE, conducting MR. SOMERTON, R.

JANE. Master, sir. (*aside*) I know which way the cat jumps. (*sighs*)

Exit into house, R.

JOHN. Take a chair, my friend.

SOMER. I must apologise for intruding at this early hour, sir.

JOHN. Not at all—business must be attended to.

SOMER. My business is of a delicate nature. I scarcely know how to—to—(*hesitates*)

JOHN. Out with it, man—never hesitate. Is it assistance you require ?—young men are very improvident at times—is it so ? You want a cheque ?

SOMER. No, sir. Sir, your repeated acts of kindness to myself and mother can never be repaid.

JOHN. My good friend, all that I have done you deserve—your energy and strict attention to my interest more than repays any little obligation conferred ; so no more about that matter now—your business, what is it ?

SOMER. You have a daughter, sir.

JOHN. And she makes me know it, the plague.

SOMER. She is an angel.

JOHN. Allow me to differ with you slightly on that subject. But pray what has she done to entitle her to such lofty admiration on your part ?

SOMER. (*abashed*) Sir, I cannot reveal—

JOHN. Ah, I guess it, young man—the old—old story over again ! Love—admiration—moonshine ! I expected as much

from your last month's ledger—two erasures and a wrong invoice. My friend, Cupid never agreed with a ready reckoner—he was not intended for a tutor's assistant. Forget this visionary trifle—attend to vulgar fractions, and strive to keep a good account at the bankers—you'll find it more profitable.

SOMER. Mr. Lawrence, I should ill repay the confidence you have been pleased to place in me, if I continue the indulgence of a hopeless passion without your approval. It is true that I love your daughter fervently and devotedly—but, sir, it is with honour.

JOHN. I believe you, on my word.

SOMER. I am fully aware that the position I am placed in renders all chances of your consent futile—without it I will never seek to plunge one that I love more than life into penury and distress.

JOHN. (*aside*) The right sort. What a pity he's made a fool of himself. Mr. Somerton, you speak as a man of honour should do. What are your ultimate intentions in this dilemma?

SOMER. To quit your employ, sir, for ever, or to return so rich that my pretensions to Miss Lawrence's hand may not be totally disregarded.

JOHN. They never shall, young man—(*shakes hands*) that I promise while John Lawrence lives. I like honest, open conduct—it is the basis of everything—makes our names as Englishmen and merchants respected and trusted all over the world, but—

KATE *peeps in from the house, L., comes down, C.*

Are you assured the girl loves you in return?

(KATE *advances slowly laughing, R.*

KATE. I rather think he is, papa.

JOHN. A very pretty confession to make to your father, miss.

KATE. (*smiling*) Open conduct, you know, papa, makes us respected all over the world.

JOHN. Silence, miss—endeavour to take a lesson from Mr. Somerton's conduct.

KATE. I have, dear papa, and hope my endeavours may be crowned with success.

JOHN. I don't doubt that for a moment. Perhaps you will leave us, as I am speaking to Mr. Somerton privately.

KATE. How horribly selfish you are to-day, papa. Mind, I won't be shut up in a convent. (*aside*) I'll listen to every word.

Exit behind a tree, R. 2 E., laughing.

JOHN. Gipsy! It is but fair, having explained yourself to me, that I in return should do the same. The fortune that I have made was gained by daily labour, strict economy and prudence. Whoever marries my Kate, must have something towards

housekeeping; disinterested affection is a very pretty thing to talk or sing about. Love in a cottage—without a banker's book, too frequently ends in regrets and reproaches. Place your shoulder to the wheel of fortune, strive manfully, resolve to be rich, and you will be so, boy—go boldly into the world, return in ten years, and then we'll talk about matrimony.

SOMER. I bow to your decision, and will leave to-morrow.

JOHN. (*shaking his hand*) Carrying with you the proud conviction of having done your duty.

SOMERTON *exits into house, R.*
Fine fellow, open and high spirited, worthy of any woman's hand (*calls*) Kate ! Kate ! (*KATE heard crying*) Now for a storm.

Enter KATE, R. 2 E., affecting to sob.

KATE. Yes, pa—oh!

JOHN. This is very weak, child, very!

KATE. I know it, but can't avoid it, papa.

JOHN. You must be guided by reason in this.

KATE. Women are not reasonable creatures you always said.

JOHN. What is it you desire?

KATE. Matrimony, if you please.

JOHN. Somerton's too poor.

KATE. You are rich enough for both.

JOHN. Nonsense! in twelve months I should have you returning home for assistance.

KATE. Permit us to try the twelve months, dear papa.

JOHN. No, no ! I know what the world is too well—no money, no peace or comfort—talk of marrying at such a time, too—Europe bristling with war—no one can tell where it may drift to in a few months.

KATE. What has war to do with Mr. Somerton, or our shores—no enemy will ever attempt to come here.

JOHN. Why not, pray miss? Where's steam, rail, electric telegraph, and sudden surprises. Egad! nothing would surprise me now- a-days.

KATE. Justice and moderation on our part ought to prevent it; but if that fails, our brave soldiers and sailors, our love for Queen and Country, backed by the cry that now resounds throughout the land, passing from lip to lip, filling every heart with enthusiasm— (*sings*) " Form, form! Riflemen form ! Form, in Freedom's name and the Queen's! " This cry will re-echo through foreign lands, and cause every hostile foe to think twice before he invades old England's liberties once.

JOHN. Say it again, say it again, my darling; those words recal the ardour of youth—a Field Marshal could not have spoken better. My sentiments to a letter.

KATE. It is every right thinking person's sentiment. Peace

is the universal prayer; but, if war must come, let us be well prepared for it.

JOHN. That's it, that's it—as we were in George the Third's time—year 1800—four hundred thousand volunteers, armed and disciplined, ready to fight for King and Country. I was one of the gallant heroes. Ah, those were days of hardship for us quiet citizens—campaign, and in bivouacing in Brentford, Bow, and Ealing—actually living in tents at Turnham Green, for a whole week, on cold meat. I was a mere boy, only seventeen. No such boys now—all premature men—too fast by half, in these times.

KATE. Papa, you are in error; the boys of the present are as good and brave as the boys of the past were. For example, witness the Volunteer Rifle Corps, how eagerly they enrolled themselves.

JOHN. Not young fellows—steady, family men—housekeepers.

KATE. Tradesmen's sons—Cousin James amongst the best.

JOHN. That scapegrace fight ? He'd run away at the first shot.

KATE. Not he, papa! he's a corporal already in our Town Corps, and looks charming in his uniform. He brought it to show me on Saturday, and it is in the house now. Will you look at it?

JOHN. No, no ; I know the calf too well, without wishing to see the skin. Convince me our youth are what you think, and I'd willingly give half my fortune to support the cause, in fact I'd give anything in the world.

KATE. What would you give me, dear papa, if I proved it to you ?

JOHN. Eh, what ?—give you—

KATE. Your consent to my marrying Harry Somerton within this year, if I succeed in convincing you that the same patriotism exists now that did in 1800.

JOHN. Willingly ; always providing he makes money—do nothing without that article.

KATE. You'll lose, papa. Harry will become your son-in-law, or my name's not saucy Kate.

Kisses him, and runs off into house, R

JOHN. Bless her little merry heart! she'd coax a blind man to see !—but it will take a great deal to persuade me out of my fixed, immovable, determined opinion. I shall give her something handsome at my death in the three per cents. Young Somerton will do something, I feel assured—he's made of the right material. (*a military march—drum and bugles heard without gates, L.*) Soldiers on the march ! This puts new life into one. Confound the gout, my marching days are over ! (*flourishes cane*) Right shoulders forward ! advance! charge !

JANE *runs on*, R.

JANE. Oh, did you see 'em, sir?

JOHN. See—who—who—what?

JANE. The rifles, sir, in grey and green, black shiny belts, glistening like parlour grates just black-leaded, lively as grass-hoppers in June. Oh, I wish I could give up crinoline, and join 'em!

JOHN. You do, do you, Miss Jane?

JANE. Yes, sir. Who could help it—they're all townfolk, too, formed into a corps.

JOHN. Won't believe it—when—when, pray ?

JANE. Ever since you went over to Holland, sir. This is a field day for shooting. Please might I go and see 'em for an hour?

JOHN. Willingly I'd go myself, but for the plaguy gout.

JANE. (*at gates*) They're stopping just opposite our gates—there's Master James, your nefey, sir, kissing his hand to Miss Kate. (*JANE kisses her hand at the gate*)

JOHN. And what are you doing, pray ?

JANE. It's only cousin, and the big drum, sir.

JOHN. Throw open the gates—tell Jem to tap a barrel of ale, the largest in the cellar—the rogues shall drink the queen's health in strong Saxon drink—rare stuff to fight on, Jane.

JANE. Yes, sir. *Running out with plates, from table, L.*

JOHN. Halt! attention !

JANE. (*dropping plates*) Coming. There's the best blues defunct.

JOHN. What are you doing now ?

JANE. Attention, sir, you told me.

JOHN. (*laughs*) Ha, ha! tell Jem to tap all the barrels if they can drink them. Run—gallop, and invite the brave fellows in to wet their whistles.

JANE. Won't I though. *Runs off, L. U. E.*

JOHN. There appears to be something in Kate's statement. The boys don't forget their breeding—my promise must be modified a trifle as to time. Jane !

JANE. (*without*) Coming, sir.

JANE *runs in*.

JOHN. Tell your mistress I wish to speak with her directly.

JANE. Yes, sir. Please, there's one of the rifles wants to thank you in the name of his extinguished corps.

JOHN. (*laughs*) The girl's head's turned! Admit him—happy to shake his hand.

JANE. (*goes to the door*) March in—eyes right!

Bugle—KATE, dressed as a Volunteer Rifleman, in green, black belt, small rifle, enters from L. U. E.

KATE. (*salutes*) Stand at ease.

JANE. Oh, ain't he a shiny beauty, neither ! *Exit, L.*

JOHN. Glad to see you—your name is—

KATE. Sampson Strong, in Grenadier Company Volunteer Rifles.

JOHN. You are welcome—sit down, make yourself at home, my fine fellow—every true Englishman's house ought to be a home for our brave defenders.

KATE. Thank you, sir, going on duty—field day, but took the liberty of thanking you for the treat you've offered to myself and gallant comrades.

JOHN. Not at all, my fine fellow. I'm an old soldier myself—know what thirsty days—field ones were in 1800.

KATE. Trifles! no consideration in 1859, sir. Ten hours practice at the target, five hundred paces—a new recreation to young men of the present day—like race horses, we are all bone and muscle, eyes of hawks, hearts of iron—make ready, present, fire, and down drops our man.

(*presents gun at* LAWRENCE—*his cane drops—sings " Form, Riflemen, Form."*)

JOHN. No fears of anticipated danger, then ?

KATE. Fears! We honour and love the policy of your queen too much to entertain fears for anything. Why, at the cry of a foe, close columns, right shoulders forward, fire and charge.

(*charges round stage after* LAWRENCE, *who runs behind table*)

JOHN. Stop, stop—you are rather too graphic in your descriptions, Mr. Sampson.

KATE. Strong—Strong by *name*, sir.

JOHN. And *nature*, apparently.

KATE. Beg pardon, I was momentarily carried away by my feelings.

JOHN. Fighting, if needed, is really your intention, then ?

KATE. I believe you, and conquering when we do fight, that's more, providence permitting. Not a lane, street, or hedge, in county or town, but would swarm with us at the first bugle call—eyes like reindeer, nerves of iron, firm as rock, well disciplined and officered, what could we not do? Let who dare to try our mettle, each artillery man would be a mark for us—nothing could live within the range of our rifles—not a man of an invading force would ever leave these shores to tell the tale.

JOHN. I begin to believe it, Mr. Strong. Who wouldn't glory in being a soldier to have one's name enrolled with the heroes of history. Marlboro', Wellington, Blenheim, Waterloo, Alma, and Inkermann.

KATE. Havelock, Nicholson, Clyde, Delhi, and Lucknow.

JOHN. Rodney, Hood, and Jarvis, the Nile, the Baltic, and the glorious first of June.

KATE. Trafalgar and our immortal Nelson, as with him, England now expects every man to do his duty. (*salutes*)

JOHN. And the expectation would be realized. The yew tree bows in the hands of English yeomen did good service at Cressy and Agincourt remember.

KATE. You will find their descendants do the same with the Enfield rifle, if ever needed. Yes—assail but the honour of England by word or deed, and the nation rises as one man, united in thought, will, and purpose. Oh, how our hearts would swell at the old battle cry of "Forward! for our native land!" With what dreadful cries of vengeance, plunging on the foe—pressing, crushing on—regardless of cannon's thunder, the clouds of fire and smoke! Tiger like—on, Rifles, on! strike for your flag and queen—the cry is irresistible—the enemy's quadrons are broken into a thousand fragments—our rifles dealing death and destruction on all around—steadily we advance, 'midst crush of artillery, plashing of infantry guns! Hurrah, they waver—fall back—throw down their arms—turn and fly! Hurrah! pursue, pursue! Baggage waggons, soldiers dying, horses running wild, the wounded without help, all fury, madness, and despair—trampled on, crushed, destroyed! Our bugles proclaim another victory for Britain's roll of fame—a laurel added to her wreath of imperishable renown.

JOHN. Hurrah, hurrah! I'll join you, my lad. (*sings*) March away—march away! Confound the gout! Your hand, my boy—I should be proud to shake hands with a whole regiment of Sampsons. Call up your comrades—a glass of good wine with an old campaigner won't harm them. Jane! (*calls at door, L.*) Jane, send half a dozen of the rifles in.

KATE. (*laughing*) Fortunately I've let my cousin James into the secret—and the upholsterer's girls are always ready for fun, come when it may, agree to assist my plot—our private theatrical dresses just suit the occasion, add to these, Cousin James's rifle, and our costume, will deceive the year 1800.

JANE. (*without*) They're marching in, sir, music and all.

Music—GIRLS, as Riflemen, enter, L. U. E., form a line, and salute arms—JANE, dressed in a large grey coat, and bear skin cap, with large drum, falls in, beating drum.

KATE. (*aside to JANE*) What have you been doing with

yourself, Jane, in this absurd dress?

JANE. 'Listing, miss—same as you. (*aside*) Cousin lent me his cap, coat, and big drum. (*beats*)

JOHN. (*points to JANE*) Is that one of the rifles ?

JANE. No, sir, I am the *band* of the *buff*. (*beats drum loud*)

KATE. Silence! (*aside*) You'll betray me. Attention !
(*they fall in rapidly.*)

JOHN. Oblige me by putting them through their facings, it will be a treat to an invalid. (*shouldering cane*) I love it.

KATE. With pleasure—we've half an hour to spare before parade.

JANE. I shall fall over this plaguy big drum, (*cap falls over her eyes*) it gets in my way so.

KATE. Attention! (*walks up and down*)

JANE. (*whispers*) Please Miss Kate, I can't see a bit.

(*KATE jerks the cap up.*)
KATE. (*aside*) Hold your stupid tongue, will you ? Eyes front, drum major. (*Music.—They go through the rifle exercise.*)

SONG.—" Form, Riflemen, Form."—BALFE.

JOHN. (*imitating with cane*) Bravo! glorious ! They'll hit 'em—they'll hit their men sure enough.

KATE. We seldom fail in hitting our man with our eyes. (*aside*) Why, we can cover a shilling at a mile with ease.

JANE. (*laughs*) Oh, oh, a shilling a mile.

KATE. Drum major! Discipline—attention !

JANE. (*beats drum*) Oh, law! (*laughs*)

KATE. Time flies, sir, we must prepare to march—duty calls.

JOHN. One minute longer, show me the new style of firing, I never saw rifle practice.

JANE. If they let off their guns, I shall swoon. Hit a shilling! they might hit me on the crown.

KATE. We want a fogle, drum major, stand by that tree.

JANE. What, to be shot at? Not for the universal globe—I couldn't miss.

KATE. Nonsense—(*aside*) do it. (*places JANE at door*)

JANE. It's no use, miss, I can't—my heart's in my boots.

(*Bugle.*)

KATE. Make ready—present.

(*JANE holds drum before her, dropping on her knees.*)

JANE. If you fire it will be manslaughter. (*screams*) Master, master, master ! (*ALL laugh*) Stop 'em, pray—I'm Triffles, not Pickles.

JOHN. Our Jane a drum major !

JANE. Don't say a word about it, sir—I was led away by the music. (*pulls off long coat and cap*) I've done with the army for ever and ever.

JOHN. Not with the service, I hope. (*laughing*) Excellent! wouldn't have missed the fun for twenty pounds—eh, Serjeant Sampson? (*turns rounds* KATE *having removed her cap*) What Kate, my Kate!

KATE. In the *Rifles*. Pardon, dear papa—women are said to be practised in *stealing* hearts, you know I've only kept up the character.

JOHN. And these gentlemen are—

KATE. Rifle volunteers—lady friends of mine. Cousin James, kindly assisting me with the rifles, convincing a certain obstinate papa that ardour and patriotism consisted in the rising generation equal to the past.

JOHN. Well, I begin to think it does, and am proud to acknowledge my error.

JANE. (*calls at door*) Please to come here, Mr. Somerton.

SOMERTON *enters from house, L.*

KATE. Your promise—once within two years. (*takes his hand*) Remember!

JOHN. And you lent your help to this masquerading, Mr. Somerton, I suppose, with Cousin James?

JANE. He was in the thick of it, master—he told missus and them gals the nexumsise in the kitchen, but luckily they knowed it, having all been stoopidnumerics at our theatre in the Battle of the Alma.

JOHN. (*laughing*) Somerton, I can trust you, and will call you son-in-law. (*shaking his hand*) We'll enjoy ourselves after duty. James shall bring your comrades back to dinner—we'll have a day of it.

JANE. And the band, sir—(*strikes drum loud*)

KATE. (*to SOMERTON*) Harry, we are more than happy now, thanks to my idea, although you shook your wise head and doubted the result. Believe me, when a woman wills, there's always a way to be found, especially when aided by such volunteers, (*they fall in*) ready to assist in a good cause. Attention! (*they fall in—JANE with drum*) Gentlemen I hope you will all become riflemen.

Ready, ready to meet the storm !
Riflemen, riflemen, riflemen form.

(GIRLS *present arms and salute. Picture and music.—"Rule Britannia."*)