

**THE VOLUNTEER LEVEE, OR,
THE REMARKABLE
EXPERIENCES OF ENSIGN
SOPHT, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF**

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The volunteer levee, or, The remarkable experiences of ensign Sopht, written by himself by
Robert Michael Ballantyne

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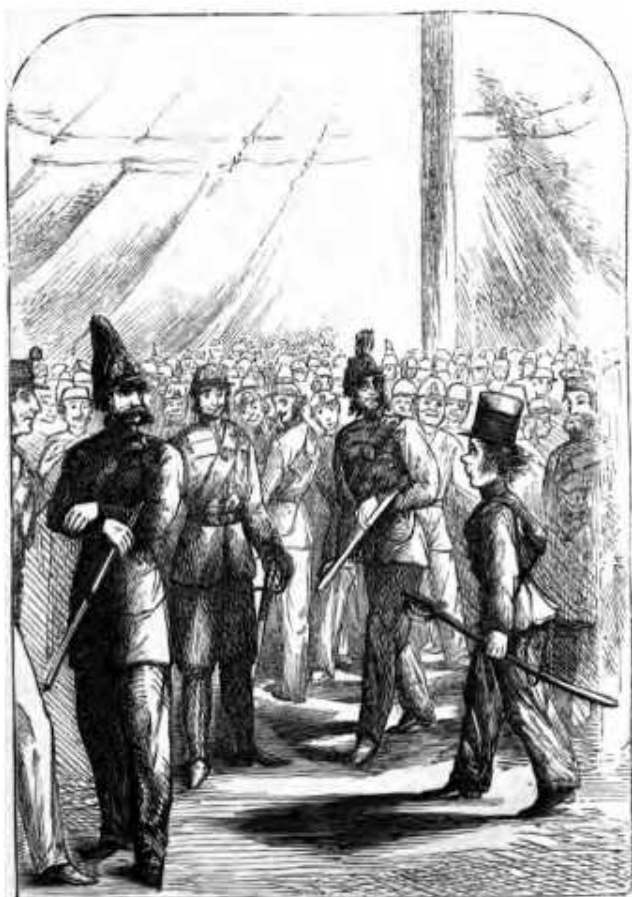
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The instant I entered all eyes were upon me, and a general litter went round.—P. 36

THE VOLUNTEER LEVEE

OR

THE REMARKABLE EXPERIENCES

OF

ENSIGN SOPHT.



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY HIMSELF.

EDITED BY THE AUTHOR OF

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P R E F A C E

WHEN the following Notes on the incidents of the Great Volunteer Levee were penned, the Author had not the most distant intention of publishing them—O dear no! by no means. Even now, it is only at the urgent request—the irresistible entreaties—of innumerable friends, that he has consented to lay them before the Public.

[EDITORIAL NOTE.—The Editor begs emphatically to state that he does not hold himself responsible for Ensign Sopht's opinions or sentiments.]

THE VOLUNTEER LEVEE.

A GREAT and memorable day for the Volunteers of Great Britain has come and gone. Wednesday the 7th of March 1860 will be chronicled not only in the archives, but in hundreds and thousands of the hearts, of this nation; for on that day the Queen of the British Empire held a Court exclusively for the reception of Volunteer Officers, and, by this crowning act of condescension, stamped the movement with her highest approval, and laid, as it were, the foundation-stone of what we have every reason to believe has now become a permanent national institution.

Good cause have the Volunteers to be proud of the honour conferred, and the trust reposed in them by their gracious Queen; and good cause, too, has Her Majesty to be proud of the free-born men of all ranks, represented by the thousands of stalwart gentlemen who on that day were honoured to bow before the throne. There is not another Sovereign under the sun who could dare to permit such a mighty host to arm and drill; and assuredly there are few, if any, other nations on the earth which could turn out a similar band of men—men within whose broad chests glow the desire for peace, and the power to do battle for it; whose actions are dictated by religion, patriotism, and the love of true

freedom; men who are willing to *work* in time of peace, and to *fight* in time of war.

I make no apology for thus eulogizing the body to which I have the honour to belong. I am proud of the Volunteers; proud to be "one of ours," and proud of the mental vigour implied in the looks, and the vital energy betokened by the magnificent *physique*, of that immense band of Officers who assembled, to the number of 2300, from all parts of the kingdom to do homage to the best Queen the world has ever seen.

I feel that I shall be freed from the charge of personal vanity in making these remarks, when I inform the reader that my own individual body is rather ungainly than otherwise.

Loyalty is, I believe, one of the main features of my character. It is ingrained in my nature; mixed up, as it were, with the marrow of my bones.

Little did I think, when I was a small boy, and passionately fond of pictures of Kings and especially of Queens, that the day was coming when the innate loyalty of my heart should find vent in connexion with a Rifle Volunteer movement; that the highest earthly honour to which I could aspire should be awarded me; that I, Richard Sopht, should be presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria; that my paltry image should fill her royal eye, and the sound of my ignoble name should fill her royal ear. *Ignoble* did I say? Yes, ignoble once; ennobled now, for ever!

When I was very young the loyalty of my nature was manifested in many ways. I have already alluded to my love for pictures of royal personages. A large print of King David, seated on his throne, which hung over the nursery chimney-piece, I used to regard as a masterpiece of painting, worthy of a Rubens. And well