

QUIMPER - AS SEEN BY THE GRAPHIC 1870-71

Distribution of Uniforms to Breton Conscripts

Quimper, one of the most important towns in Brittany, and chef-lieu of the Département of Finistère, has lately been the scene of unusual excitement. Thousands of peasants, summoned to recruit Count Kératy's army, have been arriving from their native towns and villages to be drilled, armed, and equipped for active service. As these raw levies naturally present a somewhat unmilitary aspect on their arrival, they are immediately marched off to the Prefecture, where, in the garden, which now, writes our artist, 'is gay with chrysanthemums and various evergreens, the portico of the main entrance being covered with a magnificent creeper', our sketch represents them. Under the portico a fine young Turco, the son of a Quimper lawyer, in his handsome dress of sky-blue and crimson, is duly distributing uniforms, caps &c, to the conscripts, who come up in turn to receive them.

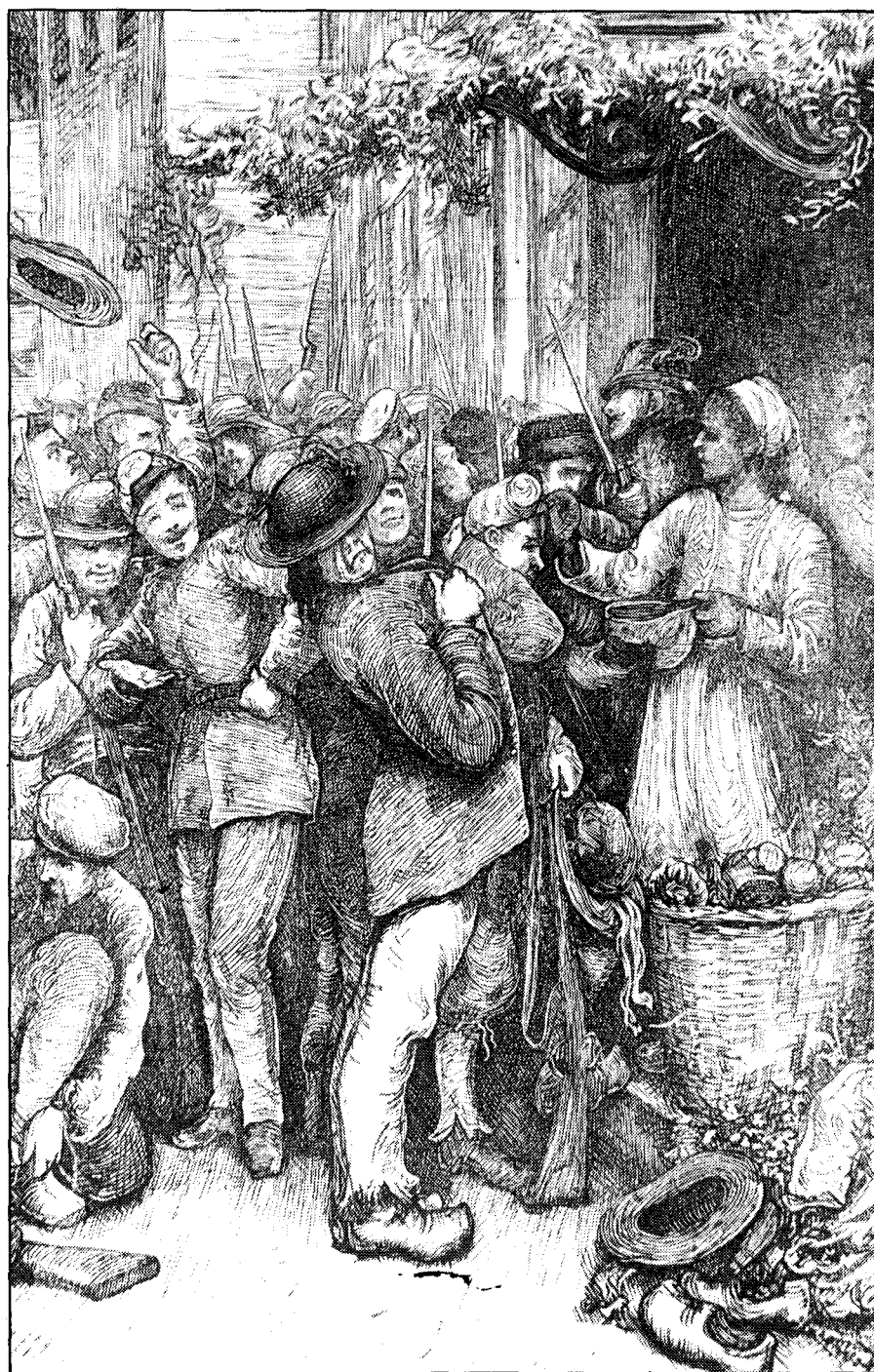
Pleased as children with a new plaything, and perhaps from a pardonable feeling of curiosity as to how their new clothes may suit them, their old

garments are doffed in an instant, the broad Breton hat replaced by the trim képi, the short jackets by the regimental coat, and the huge sabôt by the neater, though perhaps at first somewhat uncomfortable, *chaussure* of the French soldier. The next important ceremony is

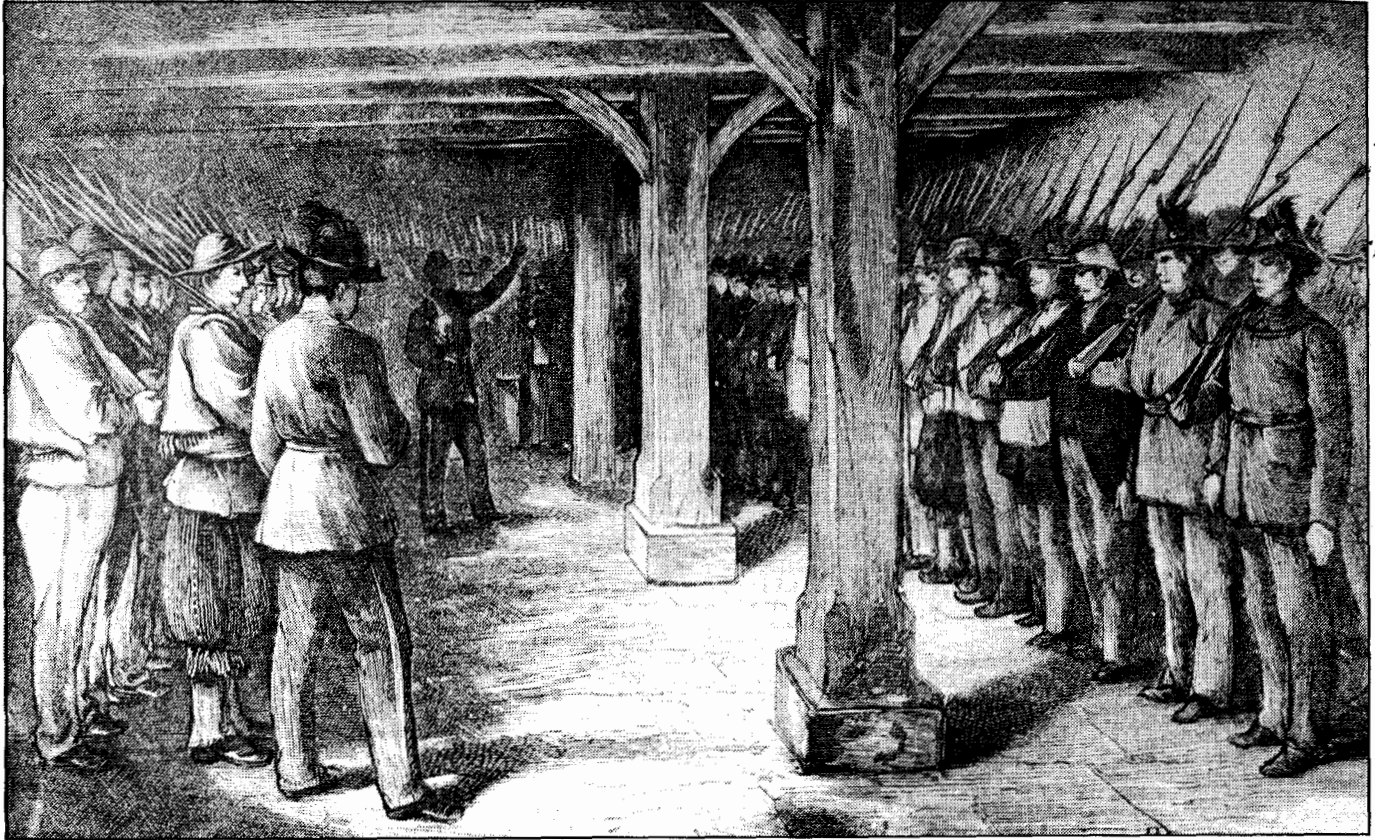
arming them: when the antiquated muzzle-loader is exchanged for the omnipotent Remington or Snider, of which large cargoes have been sent from abroad. Then commences the drill; and morning, noon and evening, they march, counter-march, wheel, and learn the



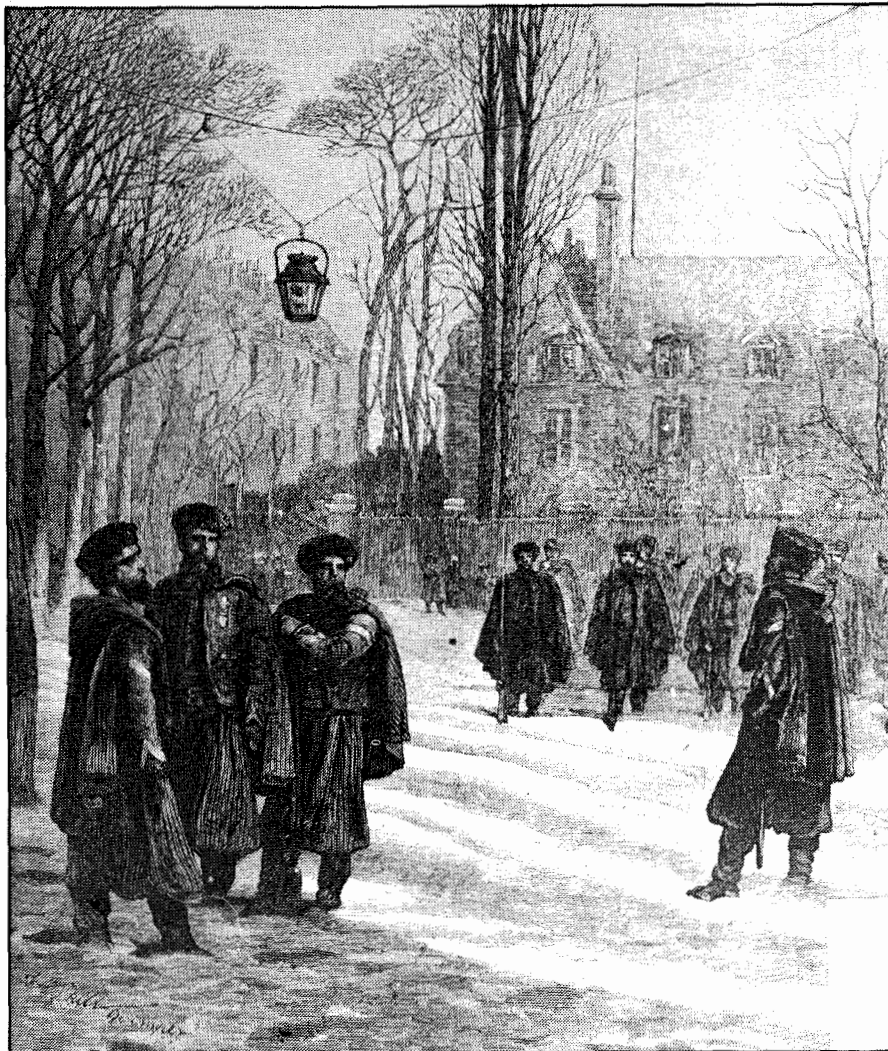
R.-T. Laennec, Quimper's most famous son.



Count Kératy's Breton army - trying on uniforms at Quimper, December, 1870.



Drilling the Francs-tireurs at Quimper, December, 1870.



The free corps of La Guérille Noire at Quimper, January, 1870.

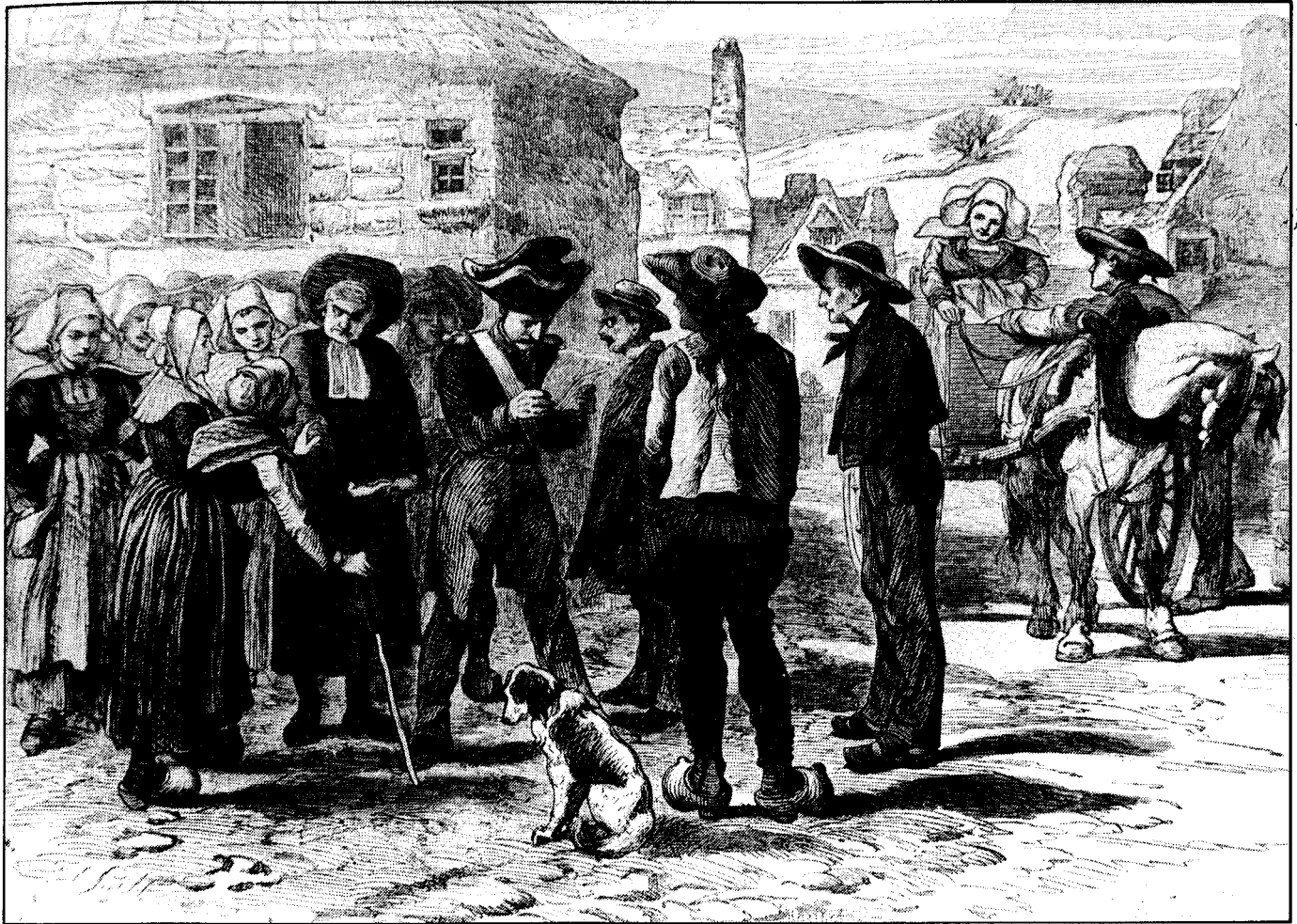
innumerable evolutions necessary for a soldiers education. When sufficiently instructed in the routine of a military life, they are marched off to Conlie, where Kératry held his head-quarters, while others arrive to go through in their turn the same process of refitting and rearming. Arrived at Conlie, the recruits are immediately embodied into the regular Western army, called, by the bye, the 'Forces of Brittany', and stated to be equal, if not superior to the armies of the North or of the Loire.

(Saturday, 3 December, 1870)

La Guérille Noire

Quimper, though only possessing about three thousand inhabitants, has been lately conspicuous by the large number of Mobiles and Francs-tireurs which it has professedly furnished to the French armies. Not that all these recruits were denizens of the town itself. Quimper furnished a strong contingent, but most of the troops were recruited from the various surrounding Breton départements, Quimper having been fixed upon as their rendezvous and place of equipment. Foremost among the bands of Francs-tireurs which have been organised here is the free corps of *La Guérille Noire*, sometimes, but erroneously, termed the *Francs-tireurs de la Mort*. They are commanded by Captain Octave Pavy, who came over from America for the praiseworthy purpose of rendering what assistance might lie in his power to his unfortunate country. Another officer of his company,

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At Pont-Aven, Brittany, — news of the Armistice.

Lieutenant P.S. Beauregard (son of the noted Confederate General Beauregard), also crossed over from New Orleans with the same object, so that, guided by officers who had shown such unmistakable proofs of patriotism, *La Guérille Noire* has a far better chance of success than many of those free corps whose words, indeed, are valorous, and would be well worthy of remark, were they not so frequently contradicted by deeds of disorder and disobedience.

The intention of Captain Pavy is to act as much as possible perfectly independently of any corps d'armée, and thereby to follow the same system of guerilla warfare which was so prevalent amongst the Texans in the late American civil war. A squad of twelve horsemen, destined to act as *éclaireurs*, is also attached to the corps. This little cavalry regiment is under the special charge of Lieutenant Beauregard.

The uniform of the corps, though perhaps somewhat funereal, is decidedly in keeping with the name. It consisted of a black suit cut in the Zouave style, a black Astracan cap, and a long hooded cloak of the same colour. On the short jacket the ducal crown and arms of Brittany are embroidered with the eight ermine tails. Indeed, the only difference between this and the Zouave's costume is that in the latter the trousers are made

somewhat after the Turkish fashion, while the *Francs-tireurs* wear the national '*bragous bras*', or trunk hose of Brittany, a garment which, like the kilt of the Highlander, the petticoats of the Ionian Greeks, or the tight trousers of the Hungarians, dates from many centuries back. The uniform of the horsemen is similar, with the exception of high boots and close-fitting trousers.

In addition to the usual armament of a free corps, both horse and foot are furnished with that formidable weapon, the Winchester repeating rifle, which carries no less than eighteen cartridges at a time, and that invaluable adjunct, a Colt cavalry six-shooter.

(Saturday, 28 January, 1871).

A Horse Fair in Brittany

Here we have a highly characteristic scene of Breton life. In many towns of Brittany a monthly horse fair is held, and these meetings are noted, not only for the excellent specimens of horse flesh which are brought together there, but for the human oddities who bring them. The horses are especially good and are much sought after in the other provinces, so that our worthy Breton often makes a good thing out of his stable. Thus, as our

sketch represents, on Fairday the peasants of the neighbourhood bring their saleable steeds to the appointed place, which in this case, is the pretty little town of Pont-Aven, and great is the bargaining and consumption of sour cider and *pétits verres* of a weak brandy that then goes on. The Breton has many odd customs of his own, he wears long hair, short jackets, baggy trousers, and wide-awake hats, but he has one trait in common with other Frenchmen, and as a Turk cannot do a stroke of business without his *tchibouk*, a Chinaman without his cup of tea, or an English farmer without his pint of ale, so cannot our Breton propose, discuss, or conclude a bargain without the aid of a *pétit verre*.

In our sketch, however, the various sellers are in a high state of anxiety, for a Government agent has come to purchase animals for military service, and will probably turn out a very profitable customer. A number of horses are accordingly being trotted out for his edification, while their owners overwhelm him with voluble assurances of their high spirits, sound condition, and especial fitness for a military life. The old gentleman holding the head of the centre horse is the small father of the strapping Breton at the side, who is trying hard to persuade M. le Commissaire that the steed is all perfection, and absurdly



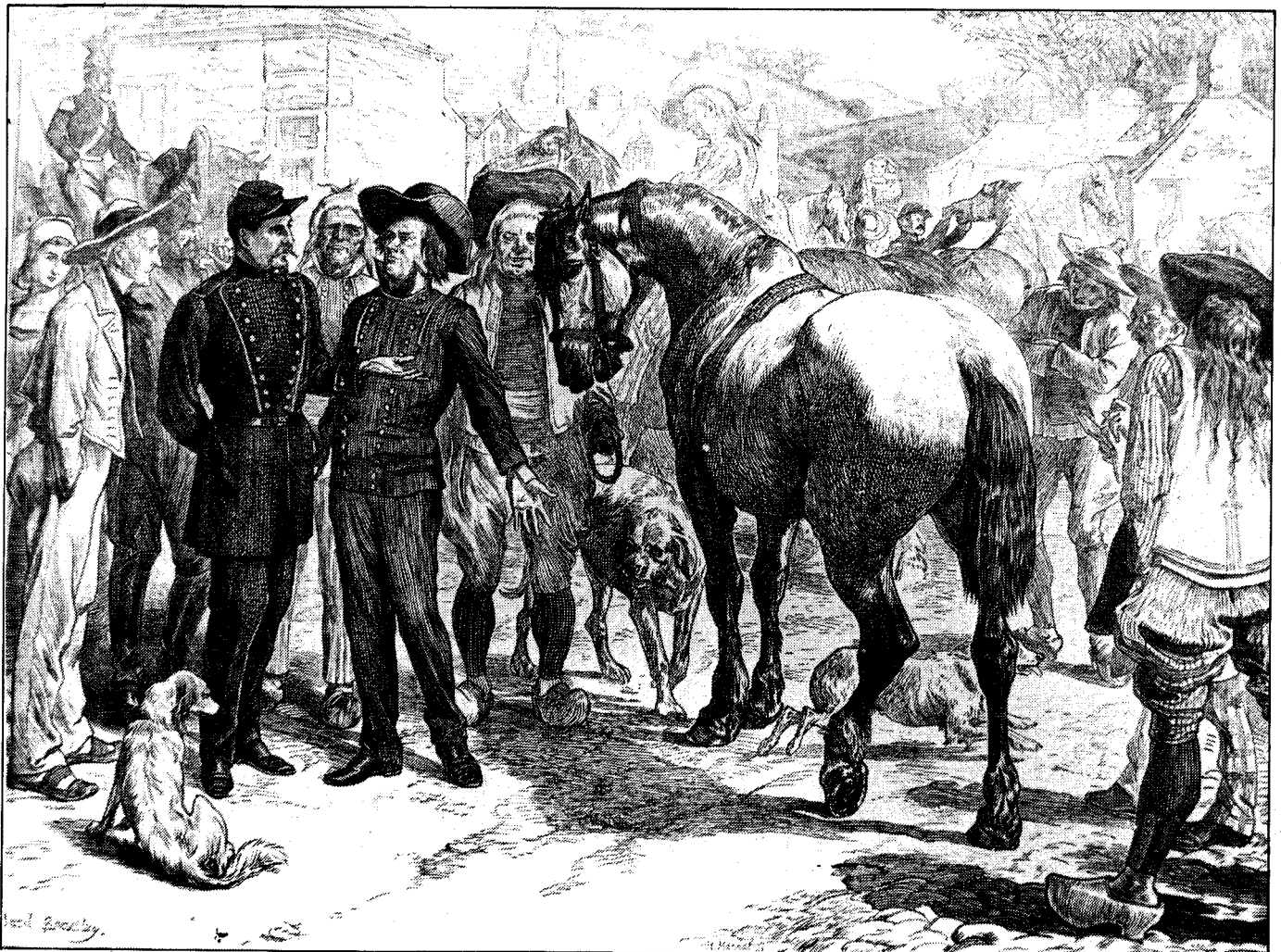
cheap at the price. The old father seems highly pleased with the financial qualities of his son, and finds it difficult to restrain his admiration, even at so critical a moment, and in such a crowd of spectators.

During the war the French army has been badly off for horses, and this is probably owing to the system of putting out the artillery horses in time of peace, *i.e.*, letting them out for agricultural purposes. It was customary to permit farmers, on the deposit of a small amount of caution money, to use the spare horses of the army for ploughing, harrowing or other rural labours. As French farmers are notorious for the carelessness with which they treat their horses, the poor animals naturally fell into bad condition, and when wanted for the campaign, were totally unfit for their work. Great numbers were then bought up in England, Ireland, and Hungary, but, as many of these were not equal to the rough work required of them, the French frequently found themselves in great straits. This, perhaps, somewhat accounts for the great superiority of the German cavalry over the French, which has been so remarkable in the present campaign.

(Saturday, 11 February, 1871).



Count Kératy's army – recruits bidding farewell to their families.



Buying horses in Brittany for the French army, February, 1871.