

A FRENCHMAN'S IDEA OF WAR IN 1842.

BY REV. CHARLES BROOKS.

In the city of Rouen, which is about half way between Havre and Paris, there lived a peasant and his wife with one child, a boy of fourteen years of age. The question once came up before this family, what will be the fate of our dear boy when he comes to the age to be drafted as a soldier? This son was their all, and in money they were somewhat poor. But the crisis could not be postponed, for old Time does not stop even for "only sons." The father loved his boy with his whole soul, and dreamed of his future health, success and reputation. As heaven has kindly suppressed all unwelcome associations with the future life of the young, this father gladdened his heart with all joyous prospects. We were near Rouen at the time, and the sequel of this family story is in strict truth as follows.

The father and mother agreed to make every exertion in their power in order to save money enough to hire a substitute for their son when he should be drawn to serve in the standing army. They made every thing bend to this one idea for four years, when they had accumulated enough to hire the proposed substitute. They deposited their money in the hands of a rich friend whose credit was high, and they waited in patience the drawing of the lists for the army. While thus resting in security, the rich man, who had their money, failed! Their all was gone; and from no one could they get a dollar to save their son from being forced away from his home to the utmost boundary of France, or to some foreign province of the realm. These parents now looked on their son with double affection, because he was a treasure which might be officially and legally snatched from them in any hour. All that was left for them was to hope that the number he should draw would be a good one, and that his lot for seven years as a soldier of France might be cast in some place near enough to Rouen to enable his parents to visit him occasionally.

Think of these parents looking on their only child and counting the days when the next lots were to be drawn, which would decide whether he was to remain with them a little longer, and if not, whether he was to go ten miles or ten hundred. They who drew certain numbers were stationed at certain previously designated camps; and the young men of eighteen drew their own number or lot from the fatal reservoir. The time had come at last when this only son, arrived at the liable age, was summoned to draw his lot and become for seven years a common soldier in the French standing army. His parents were now overwhelmed with anxiety and sadness. They must part with their darling boy. He must

go to be exposed to all the vices and degradation of a common soldier on wages of one cent a day. He might have his lot near Rouen, and he might be drafted for Algiers. If he was to get the terrible number which had Algiers and Africa written within it, then farewell every thing; for, of all the young men who go there, they whom the Arabs do not destroy, are cut down by the pestilential climate. To bury their son would be a privilege compared with this death service in Africa.

The morning was bright when the blood-lottery-ticket was to be drawn, and the parents went to the rendezvous to witness the decisive act—but not without having devoted their son to the “Blessed Virgin,” if she would put the *good number* into his young hand. His turn came, and he marches up to draw his fate. He draws, and opens his paper in the presence of the presiding officer. On the inside was written, “TO ALGIERS.” He showed it to his mother and she fell fainting on the floor. In ten days from that time he must leave home for Africa, *probably never to return!* Five days elapsed and they were spent in praying for the life of their son and in making preparations for his departure. On the morning of the sixth day the father was missing at breakfast time. They called his name aloud round the house; but he answered not. His wife went into a back shed and there her husband hung by the neck *dead!* Here was the climax of misery and destitution. Lying on the ground beneath him a letter was discovered. So soon as the body was taken down and laid out in the habiliments of death, the letter was unsealed and read.—Its words were these.—“I love my son better than my own life; and as, by the laws of France, the *only son of a widow* cannot be drafted to go out of the country as a soldier, I have felt it my duty to sacrifice my own life *to save that of my son.*”

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FIGHTING FOR ONE'S RIGHTS. This is a very patriotic term and means substantially this: I will burn down my house over my own head and the heads of my wife and children to smoke out a rat that makes inroads from my cellar wall upon my bacon and cheese.

A HARD SAYING. “Why do you come here, Wolfe?” said a Jew to that missionary in Jerusalem. “To preach the Gospel of peace,” replied Wolfe. “Peace!” retorted the Jew, “look here, at Calvary, where your different sects of Christians would fight for an empty sepulchre, if the sword of the Musselman did not restrain you; when the true Messiah comes he will banish war.”