

FOOT GRENADIERS OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD. 1815. 'LES GROGNARDS'

Napoleon affectionately called them 'les Grognards' (which means the grumblers or growlers) because they were the only Regiment who dared to grumble in front of him. The Imperial Guard was an army in itself containing many of the best and most experienced soldiers. In the 1st regiment of foot grenadiers each soldier had at least 12 years combat experience or had been decorated for bravery. They were always expected to behave well in public - never brawling or appearing drunk. Les Grognards had never been defeated in battle and had complete confidence in their ability as the finest and bravest soldiers in the world. They were Napoleon's personal bodyguard absolutely loyal to him and he knew many of them by name. They were paid more than twice the wage of the regular soldiers, given the best food and equipment, and even had their own hospital. All the Guards had big moustaches and they wore gold earrings. At the battle of Waterloo Napoleon kept his Guard grenadiers as a last reserve... at the end of the battle as his army began to break up they formed a square and held their formation until the last. They refused to surrender!

